10¢

CRIME BUSTERS

SEPT. 19

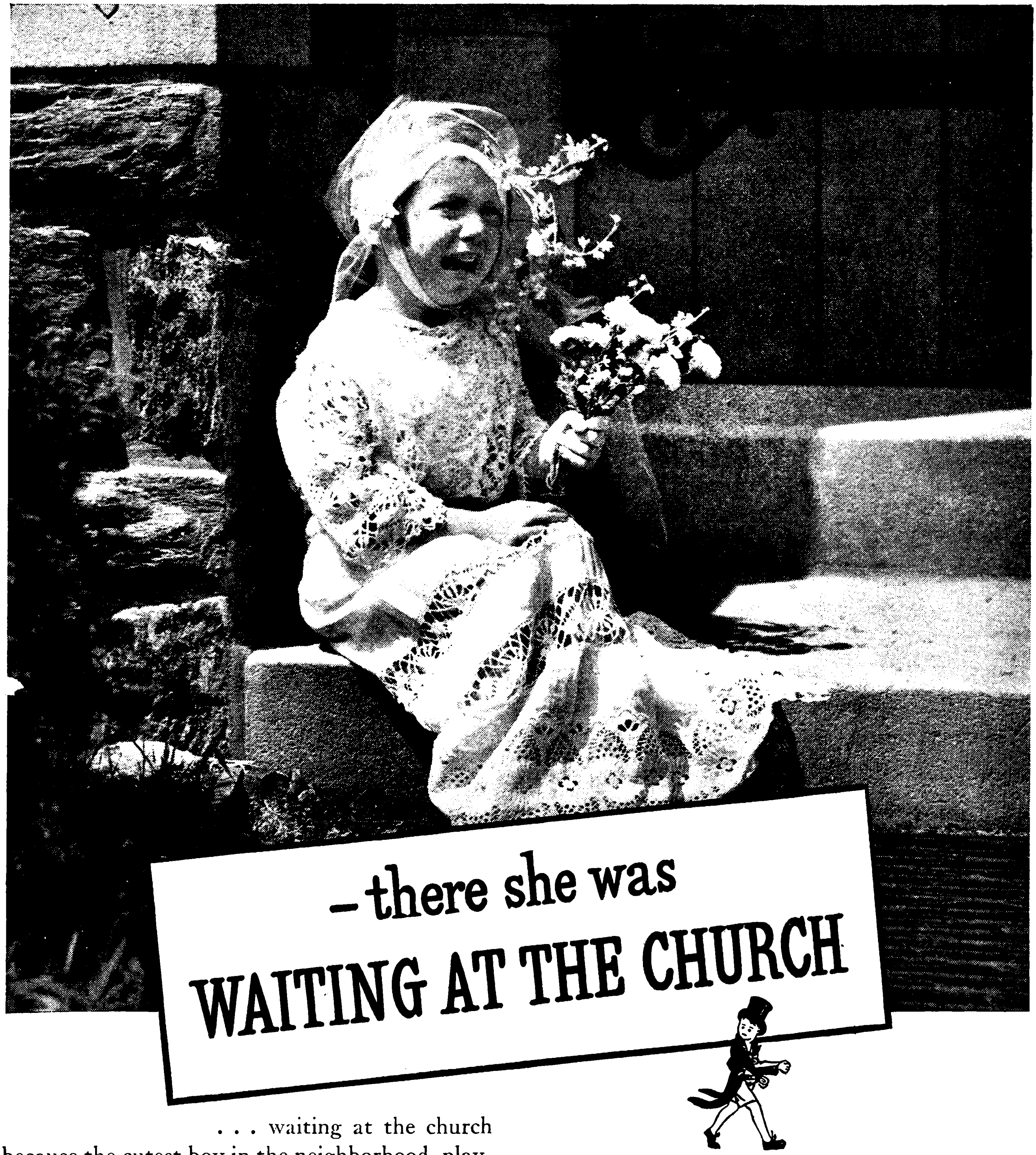
GRAVES GLADNEY

THE SILVER VENUS
By **MAXWELL GRANT**

NO TIME TO FOOL
By **THEODORE TINSLEY**

Great Detective Stories

GRUBER
HARPER
PAGE
and others



—there she was WAITING AT THE CHURCH

. . . waiting at the church because the cutest boy in the neighborhood, playing "groom" to her "bride," walked out on her—*and told her why*. Lucky little Edna, to learn so young, that halitosis (bad breath) is the fault unpardonable. Later in life, radiant, beautiful, sought after, she always used Listerine Antiseptic to make her breath agreeable.

How's *your* breath?

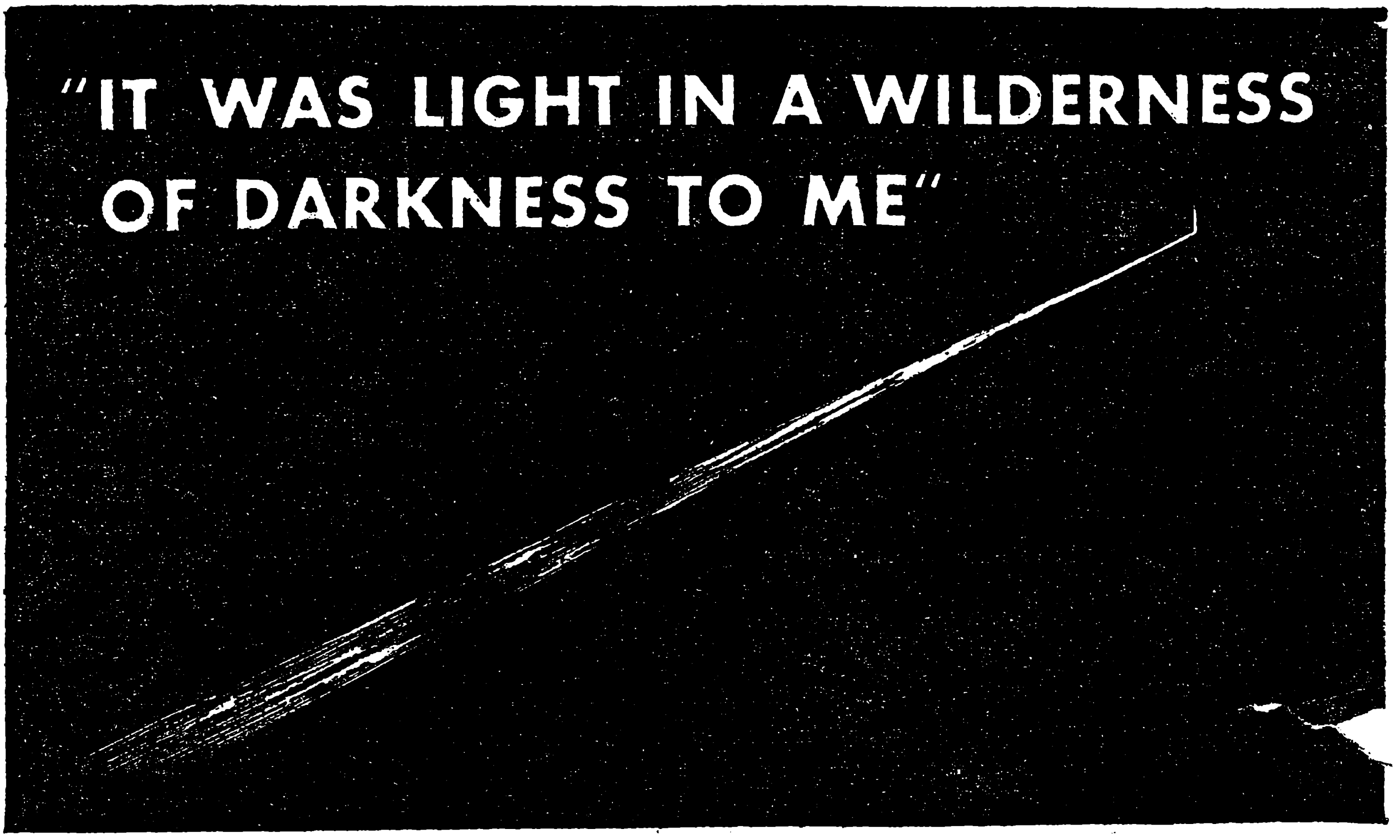
The insidious thing about halitosis (bad breath) is that it affects everyone at some time or other —*without them knowing it*. So they often offend needlessly. That goes for you, too.

Why take the chance? Why guess? Use Listerine Antiseptic to halt food fermentation in the mouth, a major cause of breath odors. Then you will know that your breath is sweeter, purer, more agreeable. Fastidious people rinse the mouth with Listerine morning and night, and between times before meeting others.

Why don't *you* acquire this delightful mouth freshening habit? It pays rich dividends in popularity. LAMBERT PHARMACAL CO., *St. Louis, Mo.*

FOR HALITOSIS *USE* LISTERINE

"IT WAS LIGHT IN A WILDERNESS OF DARKNESS TO ME"



"I WAS STUCK. A wife and three kiddies—and the same old pay envelope. I couldn't see a thing ahead except the same old grind. Then one day I read an I. C. S. ad. The coupon fascinated me. A new idea struck me—it was a light in a wilderness of darkness to me! Today, because I mailed that coupon two years ago, I am a trained man—making a trained man's pay!"

Does this suggest something to you? Then mail the coupon today!

INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS

BOX 4904-K, SCRANTON, PENNA.

★ Without cost or obligation, please send me a copy of your booklet, "Who Wins and Why," and full particulars about the subject *before* which I have marked X: ★

TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COURSES

☐ Architect
☐ Architectural Draftsman
☐ Building Estimating
☐ Contractor and Builder
☐ Structural Draftsman
☐ Structural Engineer
☐ Management of Inventions
☐ Electrical Engineer
☐ Electric Lighting
☐ Welding, Electric and Gas
☐ Reading Shop Blueprints
☐ Heat Treatment of Metals
☐ Sheet Metal Worker
☐ Boilermaker
☐ Telegraph Engineer
☐ Telephone Work ☐ Radio
☐ Mechanical Engineering
☐ Mechanical Draftsman
☐ Machinist ☐ Toolmaker
☐ Patternmaker
☐ Diesel Engines
☐ Aviation Engines
☐ Auto Technician
☐ Auto Electrical Technician
☐ Commercial Refrigeration
☐ Plumbing ☐ Steam Fitting
☐ Heating ☐ Ventilation
☐ Air Conditioning and Cooling
☐ Steam Engineer
☐ Steam Electric Engineer
☐ Marine Engineer
☐ R. R. Locomotives
☐ R. R. Section Foreman
☐ Air Brakes ☐ R. R. Signalmen
☐ Highway Engineering
☐ Civil Engineering
☐ Surveying and Mapping
☐ Bridge Engineer
☐ Bridge and Building Foreman
☐ Chemistry ☐ Pharmacy
☐ Coal Mining
☐ Mine Foreman ☐ Fire Bosses
☐ Navigation
☐ Cotton Manufacturing
☐ Woolen Manufacturing
☐ Agriculture
☐ Fruit Growing
☐ Poultry Farming

BUSINESS TRAINING COURSES

☐ Business Management
☐ Industrial Management
☐ Traffic Management
☐ Accountancy
☐ Cost Accountant
☐ C. P. Accountant
☐ Bookkeeping
☐ Secretarial Work
☐ Spanish
☐ French
☐ Salesmanship
☐ Advertising
☐ Service Station Salesmanship
☐ First Year College Subjects
☐ Business Correspondence
☐ Stenography and Typing
☐ Civil Service ☐ Mail Carrier
☐ Railway Mail Clerk
☐ Grade School Subjects
☐ High School Subjects
☐ College Preparatory
☐ Illustrating
☐ Cartooning
☐ Lettering Show Cards ☐ Signs

DOMESTIC SCIENCE COURSES

☐ Home Dressmaking
☐ Professional Dressmaking and Designing
☐ Advanced Dressmaking
☐ Foods and Cookery
☐ Tea Room and Cafeteria Management, Catering

Name..*Age*..............*Address*..

City..*State*..............................*Present Position*..

If you reside in Canada, send this coupon to the International Correspondence Schools Canadian, Limited, Montreal, Canada

On Sale Last Wednesday Of Every Month

CRIME BUSTERS

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION, $1.00 SINGLE COPIES, 10 CENTS

The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission.

Volume II September, 1938 Number 5

ALL STORIES COMPLETE

THE DANCING DOG . . . By Kenneth Robeson 6

Ed Stone, prize fighter, meets the lady—because of Napoleon Bonaparte!

NO TIME TO FOOL . . . By Theodore Tinsley 24

Carrie Cashin, in whirlwind style, starts a crook clean-up!

THE SILVER VENUS . . . . By Maxwell Grant 41

Even Norgil the magician could not stop it from becoming something horrible!

MONKEY MAN . . . . . . By Mark Harper 57

Homicide men at work—trapping a butcher!

OUR "FORGOTTEN HEROES" 71

—are the Customs Men, and Gregory W. O'Keefe is a fine example.

CAMERA KILL. . . . . . . By Frank Gruber 76

The Racket Man and the photographers of death!

BLOOD ARROW . . . . By Norvell W. Page 92

Into Chinatown's sinister hallways of death, goes the Death Angel on a kidnap trail!

SMOKED OUT . . . . By Laurence Donovan 109

Death rides the Limited!

THIS MAGAZINE CONTAINS NEW STORIES ONLY. NO REPRINTS ARE USED.

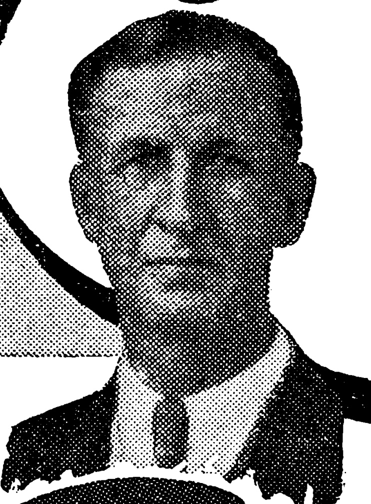
Monthly publication issued by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Allen L. Grammer, President; Henry W. Ralston, Vice President and Treasurer. Copyright, 1938, by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., New York. Copyright, 1938, by Street & Smith Publications, Inc., Great Britain. Entered as Second-class Matter, August 28, 1937, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879. Subscriptions to Canada, Cuba, Dom. Republic, Haiti, Spain, Central and South American Countries, except The Guianas and British Honduras, $1.25 per year. To all other Foreign Countries, including The Guianas and British Honduras, $1.70 per year.

We do not accept responsibility for the return of unsolicited manuscripts.
To facilitate handling, the author should inclose a self-addressed envelope with the requisite postage attached.

STREET & SMITH PUBLICATIONS, INC., 79 7th AVE., NEW YORK, N. Y.

Make me Prove

THAT I CAN TRAIN YOU AT HOME FOR A *Good Job in Radio*



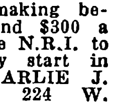
Here's Proof
My Training Pays

I Will Send You a Sample Lesson FREE

Clip the coupon and mail it. I will prove that I can train you at home in your spare time to be a RADIO EXPERT. I will send you my first lesson FREE. Examine it, read it, see how clear and easy it is to understand—how practical I make learning Radio at home. Then you will know why men without Radio or electrical knowledge have become Radio Experts and are earning more money than ever as a result of my Training.

OWNS PART TIME RADIO BUSINESS

"I am a locomotive engineer with the B. & M. Railroad, and work part time in Radio. In the selling end I have made as high as $300 in one month and have added to that about $100 in service work."—FRANK McCLELLAN, 902 Elizabeth St., Mechanicville, N. Y.



DOUBLED SALARY IN 5 MONTHS

"Shortly after I started the N. R. I. Course I began teaching Radio classes at the Spartan School of Aeronautics. After five months I was given a chance to join the American Airlines at a salary double that which I received from the school."—A. T. BROTHERS, 231 Beach, Ocean Park, Santa Monica, Calif.

$200 TO $300 A MONTH IN OWN BUSINESS

"For the last 18 months I have been in business for myself, making between $200 and $300 a month. I have N.R.I. to thank for my start in this field." ARLIE J. FROEHNER, 224 W. Texas Ave., Goose Creek, Texas.

Many Radio Experts Make $30, $50, $75 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations pay engineers, operators, station managers up to $5,000 a year. Spare time Radio set servicing pays as much as $200 to $500 a year—full time servicing pays as much as $30, $50, $75 a week. Many Radio Experts own their own businesses. Manufacturers and jobbers employ testers, inspectors, foremen, engineers, servicemen, paying up to $6,000 a year. Automobile, police, aviation, commercial Radio, and loud speaker systems are newer fields offering good opportunities now and for the future. Television promises many good jobs soon. Men I trained have good jobs in all these branches of Radio.

Many Make $5, $10, $15 a Week Extra in Spare Time While Learning

Almost every neighborhood needs a good spare time serviceman. The day you enroll I start sending Extra Money Job Sheets showing how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your training I send plans and ideas that made good spare time money for hundreds. I send Special Equipment to conduct experiments, build circuits, get practical experience. I ALSO GIVE YOU A COMPLETE, MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL WAVE, ALL PURPOSE RADIO SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT TO HELP SERVICE SETS QUICKER—SAVE TIME, MAKE MORE MONEY.

Money Back Agreement Protects You Save Money—Learn at Home

I am sure I can train you successfully. I agree in writing to refund every penny you pay me if you are not satisfied with my Lessons and Instruction Service when you finish. I'll send you a copy of this agreement with my Free Book.

Get My Lesson and 64-Page Book FREE. Mail Coupon

In addition to my Sample Lesson, I will send you my 64-page book "Rich Rewards in Radio." Both are FREE to anyone over 16 years old. My book points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in television; my Training in Radio and Television shows you letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing and earning; shows my Money Back Agreement. MAIL THE COUPON in an envelope, or paste it on a penny postcard.

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute
Dept. 8GD Washington, D. C.

THIS FREE BOOK
Has Helped Hundreds of Men Make More Money

RICH REWARDS IN RADIO

GOOD FOR BOTH 64 PAGE BOOK SAMPLE LESSON FREE

J. E. SMITH, President, National Radio Institute,
Dept. 8GD, Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Smith:

Without obligation, send me the Sample Lesson and your free book about the spare time and full time Radio opportunities, and how I can train for them at home in spare time. (Please write plainly.)

Name.................................... Age........

Address...

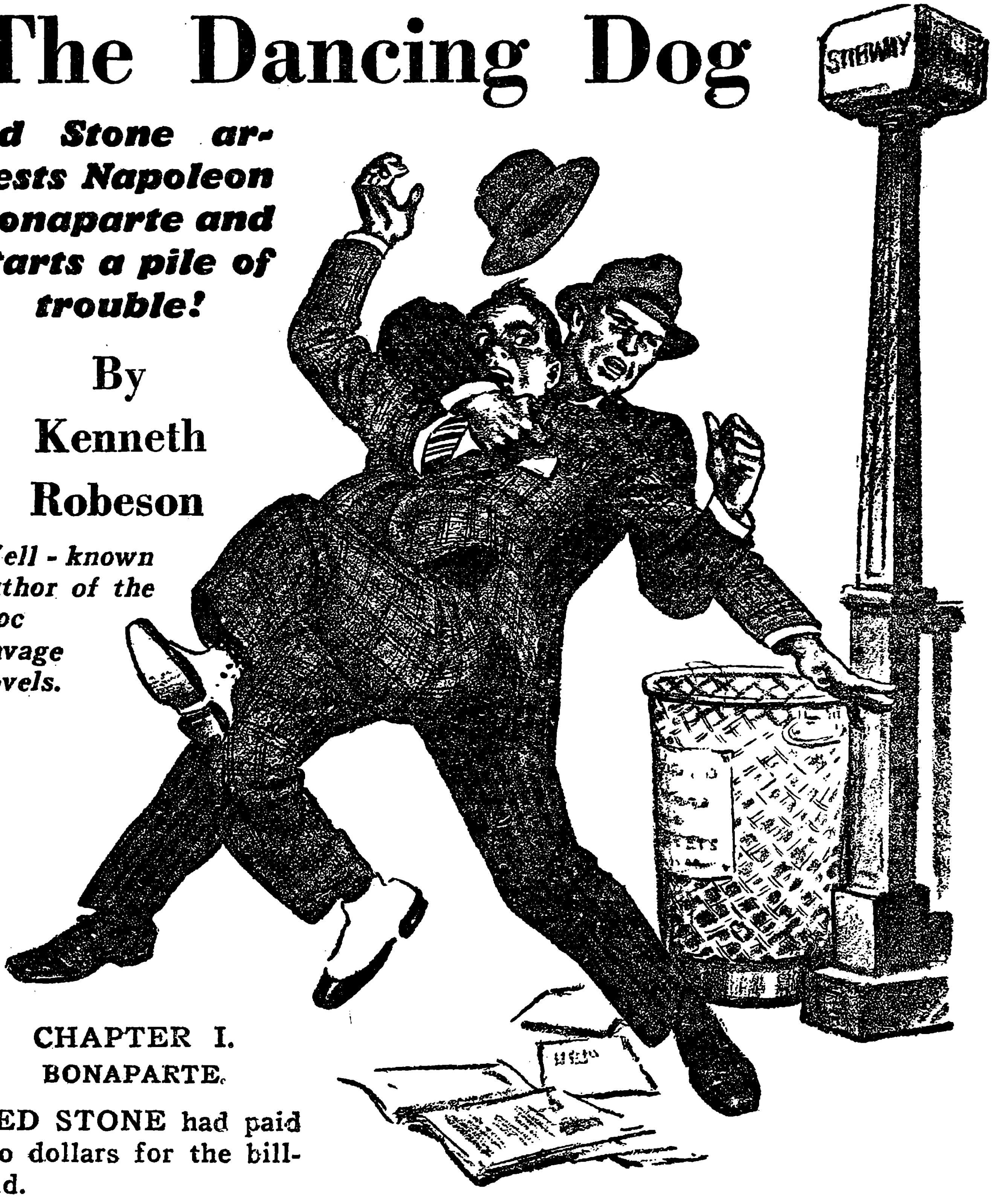
City........................... State.............2FR

The Dancing Dog

Ed Stone arrests Napoleon Bonaparte and starts a pile of trouble!

By Kenneth Robeson

Well - known author of the Doc Savage novels.



CHAPTER I.

BONAPARTE.

ED STONE had paid two dollars for the billfold.

So he dropped the billfold in the fat stranger's coat pocket without any great enthusiasm.

The subway train was a roaring mechanical worm headed for the Bronx, and the patrons were packed into the cars like sardines in cans, or rather more like pickles in jars, since it was evening and the passengers were sour-faced and tired.

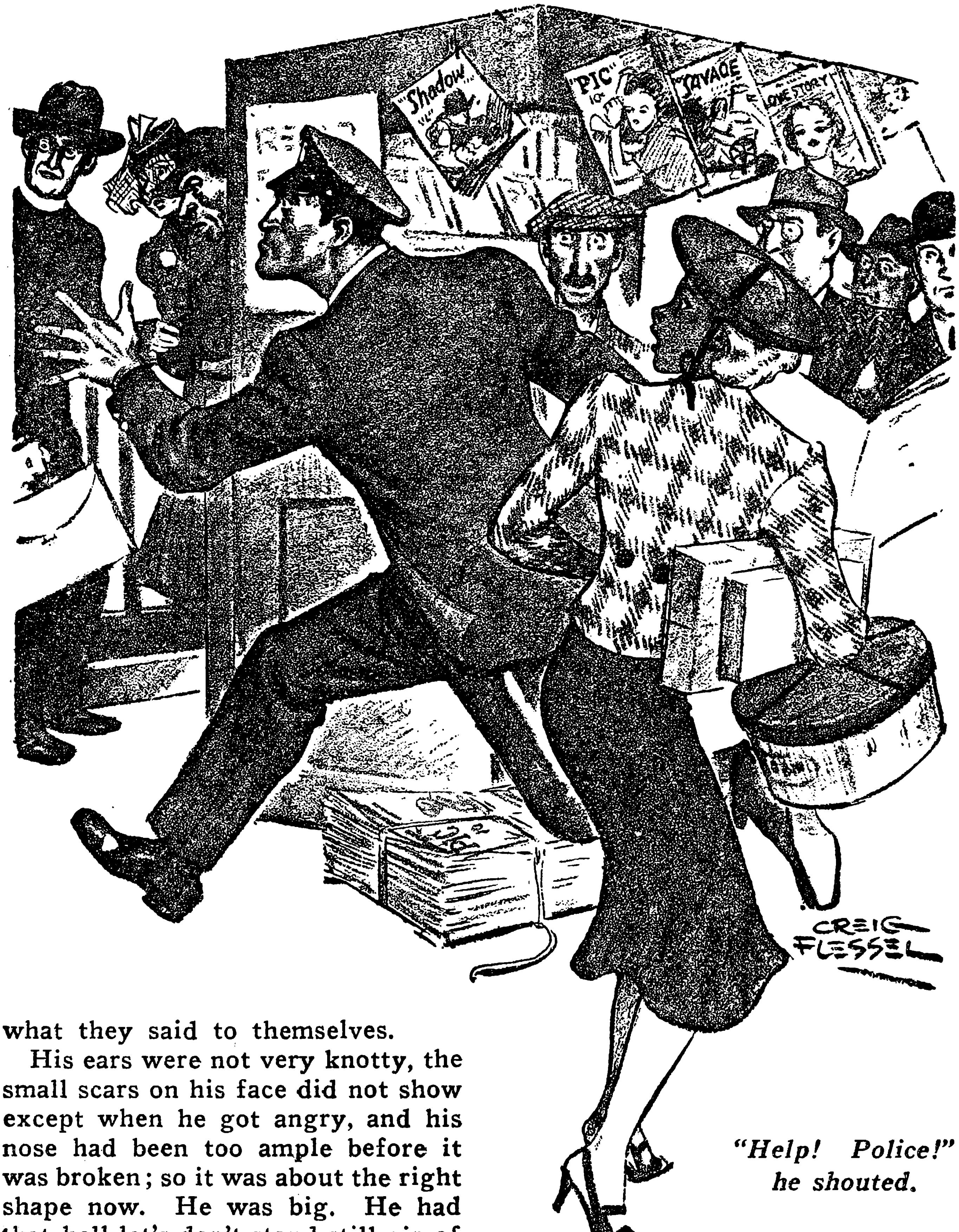
Ed Stone deposited his billfold in the stranger's coat pocket while the train was lunging around a curve and flinging Stone and the fat man and the other strap-hangers against each other.

"Now," Stone said, "the bug is in the beer."

He did not say it out loud.

Quite a number of people in the subway car had given Ed Stone a second glance. They were tired and cross, not interested in anything much except their evening victuals and an easy chair or a movie; but still they had given Stone an extra inspection.

“Another poor knot-eared prize fighter.”



“Help! Police!” he shouted.

At least, Stone suspected that was what they said to themselves.

His ears were not very knotty, the small scars on his face did not show except when he got angry, and his nose had been too ample before it was broken; so it was about the right shape now. He was big. He had that hell-let’s-don’t-stand-still air of a trained race horse. The women liked to look at him.

But Stone’s present opinion of himself was low.

Being broke does that.

Stone hung to the white iron loop while the subway train thundered and swayed, and stale air blew in the windows. Then the train stopped as if the engineer were trying to throw everybody off their feet. Stone got out of the train and the fat stranger got out after him.

At the exit from the subway station, Stone turned quickly and took the plump man by the neck. He had known the fat one would be right there behind him.

Stone yelled loudly.

"Help! Police!" he shouted.

A COP came running. A cop almost as big as Stone.

"Pickpocket!" Stone said.

The cop pointed at the little round man. "Him?"

"Yes."

"You're absolutely crazy!" said the little round prisoner. "Absolutely!"

Stone suggested, "Suppose we search him."

They examined the victim's pockets, and the billfold came to light.

"My name is Edward Stone," Stone said. "I'm a professional boxer, and you'll find my license in there. I'm a member of the Central, North Side, Arena, and National A. C., all athletic clubs. You'll find the cards. I fought the Montana Mauler a few weeks ago, and got knocked on my you-know-what. You'll see newspaper clips about that. Some of the Clippings have my picture. Note the resemblance."

The cop looked.

"Check," he said. "You want to swear out a complaint against this monkey?"

"I'll swear at him all day," Stone said.

The cop looked at his prisoner.

"What's your name?" the officer demanded.

"Napoleon Bonaparte," the little man said.

"I'll Bonaparte you!" the cop advised. He grabbed the fat man's coat lapels in one big fist, jammed the prisoner against a wall and slapped him, left hand, then right. He stood on the victim's toes.

"Pick pockets on my beat, will you!" the officer grated.

He began twisting the small round man's ears.

Stone walked away from there. He had been holding his retrieved billfold, and now he put it in a pocket. The cop was too pleasantly occupied to notice the leave-taking.

He glanced back at the crowd which had gathered to see if he saw anyone who looked like a detective. Plain-clothes men ride the subways looking for pickpockets. But Stone wasn't certain whether anyone in the crowd was a dick or not.

Thus Stone was careful about his leave-taking.

He crossed the street, went downstairs into the subway again, took a local train headed in the opposite direction than the one he had been on. He rode one station, got out, came up to the street. There he hailed a cab, but changed five blocks later before ordering another driver to take him to his home.

He was reasonably certain that no one was following him.

STONE occupied six rooms in an apartment house which was impressive and expensive. He was relieved when the uniformed doorman saluted, more relieved at the courteous bow of the elevator boy, and he glowed when he found his keyhole had not been French-keyed.

A French key is a lead slug they put in the lock to keep you out when you haven't paid your rent. The manager had assured Stone he would find a French key in his lock this afternoon.

Stone stepped inside.

To his nostrils came the pleasant aroma of food well prepared.

Stone put out his jaw wrathfully.

"Bet I know who's responsible!" he growled.

He strode into the kitchen.

"One," the Chinaman, was making a sauce for the duck he had baked. One was a midget, even for a Chinaman, but he looked very well fed. He wore large shell-rimmed spectacles which magnified his eyes and gave them a lamblike aspect. Also, he had the general air of a fellow who would become frightened very easily; but this appearance, Stone had learned, was deceptive.

"One!' Stone yelled.

The Chinaman stirred the sauce for the duck innocently.

"If smell do not mislead," he remarked, "this lowly one have cook a duck fit for a mandarin."

Stone said, "Never mind the duck. What do you know about Napoleon Bonaparte?"

"He great French war lord," One said. "Set civilization of white race back two hundred years."

"I don't mean that one. This one started following me around. He trailed me all day, up until I got tired of it and played a little trick on him."

One considered seriously.

"Not know him," he said. "Much sorry."

Stone eyed his valet-cook suspiciously. At times, the Chinaman puzzled him completely. A little longer than a month ago, the Chinaman had turned up and announced that he was Stone's valet. Just like that. No explanations; no nothing. Only a little cherub of a Chinaman who said he was Stone's new valet.

Stone needed a valet about as much as an Eskimo needs an electric refrigerator.

THERE had been a rat in the kindling, of course. Ed Stone had a crooked manager at the time, and it developed suddenly that the manager had stolen a collection of money which Japanese in America had taken up to buy war planes to aid their homeland's conquest of China. This Chinaman had learned about that somehow. There had been a mess, and men had died. In the windup, One had made off with the Japanese collection.

Stone knew certainly, but without being able to prove it, that One had taken the Japanese money and given it to the Chinese cause. Stone didn't mind that so much.

What he did mind was not being able to understand exactly why One stuck around. There was no pay in his valet-cook job, Stone being flat broke, and with a month's rent due on the apartment.

One had saved Stone's eyesight in the course of the adventure a month ago, so Stone couldn't very well fire him.

One wasn't his name, really. The name sounded like a Cantonese dog fight of duration, and since the valet frequently referred to himself as a lowly one, Stone had gotten the habit of calling him "One."

At first, Stone had gotten the impression the round-faced little man's name was Tong, and had called him that for a short time. But now he had definitely nicknamed the man One.

Stone said, "You look too dang innocent to suit me."

"Good deed always bring righteous look," One explained.

"What you mean—good deed?"

"I pay rent."

"You what! Where'd you get the money?"

One reached into a pocket and withdrew two dice which he put on the table. From another pocket he brought out two more dice and placed them beside the first pair.

"Brothers?" he asked.

Stone examined the dice. "They look alike."

One then separated the second pair of cubes from the first.

"These two are black sheep," he explained.

"Loaded, eh?" Stone clucked accusingly. "Don't you know that's swindling?"

"I indulge in pastime with three Japanese fellow," One said.

He spoke like a man with a clear conscience.

Stone gave it up. He picked up a fork and gave an appreciative poke or two at the duck which One was preparing. "Where'd you get the gosling?"

"I buy him with winnings."

"And you don't know the local Napoleon Bonaparte?"

"That his real name?"

"I'd be surprised if it was."

"Not know him," One said.

Stone eyed the duck, and his mouth watered. Then the doorbell rang. It gave three sharp rings before Stone reached the door and opened it.

The girl said, "I came about the Dancing Dog."

Stone said, "That's swell. You're talking to the old maestro of dancing dogs."

He hadn't the slightest idea what she was talking about.

STONE was trying to be smart. The remark was not very smart, at that, but it was the best he could do under the impact of the girl.

She took your breath away, particularly when you'd never seen her before. She was not tall, and she was not blond, which made it more remarkable. She was a little redheaded girl who was a shower of sparks—an electric shock, and as effective as a skyrocket swishing at midnight on January 13, the last time you'd expect to see a skyrocket.

Stone knew nothing about any dancing dogs. A moment later, he began to understand that he shouldn't have cracked wise.

He saw that he'd said the wrong thing when the little titian-haired girl showed him a gun. It was a very big revolver for her small hands, and when she took it out of her handbag it was all cocked and everything.

"Come in, boys," the girl called.

The "boys" came in. They had been lined up in the corridor, backs to the wall where they would not be noticed. Four of them.

"This is the right place," the girl said. "You heard him say he knew all about the Dancing Dog."

Stone looked the men over, and decided they were assorted degrees of tough. Not tough physically. Mentally. It showed in their eyes, and the way they held their mouths.

"I was kidding!" Stone said quickly.

"We're not!" the girl advised.

One of the hard men went into the kitchen, holding a gun ready, and came back a moment later pushing One, the Chinaman.

"You as much as bat an eye," the man was telling One, "and you'll be as dead as that duck you were cooking."

Stone said, "Look, I was kidding you."

"When?" the girl demanded.

"At the door. It was a line. You're a beauty, and I knew if I said I didn't know anything about any dancing dog, you'd walk off. I didn't want that."

She was not impressed.

"That's pretty," she said. "And I suppose you're married."

"So you don't know much about me," Stone decided.

"All we know is this—" the girl snapped.

She drew from her purse part of a want-ad page of a newspaper and held it out. The item she wanted him to read was ringed with a pencil.

> MEW—I HAVE THE DOPE ON THE D. D. MATTER. WHAT HAS HAPPENED? GET IN TOUCH WITH ME AT 1103 EASTWARD BLVD.

The girl took the paper back and said, "That's enough, isn't it?"

"It has my address on it," Stone admitted.

"I guess you didn't notice that Mew got killed," the girl said.

Stone shook his head. "This is all a complete mystery to me."

"You can think it over," the girl said, "while we take a little trip."

Ed Stone knew that the "trip" was to be a one-way ride to the country, more than likely.

The four men split up into two groups, and each group led Stone and the valet out into the hallway. The gunmen were first very careful to make certain that no one was watching.

They took their captives toward the rear of the building, down a freight elevator and through a rear alleyway that was deserted.

Ed Stone thought that he had never seen a passageway so completely deserted in all his life.

The guns covering himself and One looked as if they could make an awful lot of noise in such a deserted place.

They reached the street without meeting anyone, and the girl stated flatly, "Climb in!"

CHAPTER II.

TROUBLE ADVERTISED FOR.

THE girl and the four men had come in two cars, neither of which were new. The girl drove the lead car, and with her rode One and the man who was guiding him.

The other three men took the remaining car, one driving and two sitting in the back with guns trained on Stone. Their guns, revolvers of different sizes, looked much-carried.

"I've got this egg placed," one man said. "He's Ed Stone. I seen him fight once at the Arena. He's right handy."

"Where we going?" Stone asked.

"Bye-bye."

After that, there was a silence.

What was happening did not make the least bit of sense to Stone. He had never before seen the little fat man—Napoleon Bonaparte—who had started trailing him around today. This girl and these men were strangers. He knew nothing about the newspaper want ad, or the matters to which it referred, even if it did contain the address of his apartment.

All he knew was that he had been making the rounds of the fight promoters trying to get spotted in a bout, and having no luck because it was the slack season—when all this hodgepodge had landed on him.

The cars rolled out of town, turned toward the river, and traversed a rutty road. It was dark, shacks along the road being barey distinguishable in the murk, and after a while these sad evidences of habitation disappeared.

The stop was made at a large, ancient dock, the cars driving out on the dock itself before they halted.

Stone was herded aboard a barge which was tied to the dock. The barge was large, with a deep cargo pit and a shacklike cabin at one end. This cabin appeared small until they were inside, when it proved to be nearly the size of a house, except for the low ceiling.

"So you were the mug workin' with Mew!" one of the men said, and struck Stone in the face.

The girl appeared in the door, snapped, "Stop that!"

The men backed away, and Stone saw two of them exchange winks. Then the girl was giving orders.

"Tie them to chairs," she said.

This was done.

ONE, the Chinaman, went into a staring silence, which could not have been more effective if he had turned into a yellowish rock.

The girl peered into her purse, then took out a newspaper clipping and said, "We'll start off by getting you straightened out on the situation." She held the clipping in front of Stone's nose.

"I can't think of any better way to start than by getting it straightened out," Stone told her, and read the clipping. The thing was short:

> ### TORTURE VICTIM IN RIVER
>
> #### TRUCK MISSING
>
> The body of a man identified as "Mew" Wheeler, a truck driver, was found in the river yesterday by boys who were swimming. Apparently the man had been tortured, then murdered and thrown in the river.
>
> The slain man was employed as the regular driver of a transport truck.
>
> Identification was made by Miss Olivia Marks, owner of the truck, and operator of a truck line since the death of her father two years ago.
>
> Olivia Marks stated to police that the truck regularly driven by Mew Wheeler has vanished mysteriously. Each truck of the Marks line bears a name. The missing truck was named the "Dancing Dog."
>
> There are no clues police say.

Stone finished reading this and looked up.

"Olivia?" he said.

"Yes," the girl answered.

Stone gestured at the assembled men. "Who are these lamblike characters?"

"They are my regular truck drivers," the girl explained.

"Have you found the Dancing Dog yet?"

"With your help," the girl said grimly, "I'm sure we can find it."

"With my help?" Stone said, astonished.

She nodded. "The advertisement you put in the newspaper shows plainly that you know the whereabouts of the Dancing Dog."

Stone started to argue, then changed his mind, seeing that she was convinced he knew what had become of her truck; and having thought over the situation for a moment, he decided to put a question that might lead to something sensible.

"What was the load of the Dancing Dog when the truck got missing?" he asked.

He could tell from the girl's expression that he had rung the bell. But she did not give the answer he hoped.

"He's stalling," she said. "We'll have to work him over."

STONE was watching her closely when she said that, and he decided she did not really want to do him bodily damage. She was feeling desperate. She had started something, and did not know what else to do except go ahead. So she might stand by and let her drivers hurt him. They would do almost anything to Stone with pleasure.

Stone saw no sense in being hurt over something he did not know anything about.

"Now look here," he said. "This is what happened. Listen to me."

He told them about the round little man who had started following him that day, and described the pickpocket trick he had played on the fellow to get rid of him.

He explained with great emphasis and clarity that he did not know a blasted thing about the want ad in the newspaper.

"Now," he finished, "that's all of the truth. If you start beating me, I'll only have to begin making up lies for you."

The girl was unimpressed.

"He's lying," she declared. "His story is too silly."

The men had been looking at each other. Stone did not like the way they had been doing so. It made him feel creepy.

One of the men said, "Miss Olivia."

"Yes?"

"Before we beat up this poor gook, why couldn't you and I go uptown and check and see who put that want ad in the newspaper," the man suggested. "Then we'd be sure."

"A good idea!" the girl exclaimed.

She was glad to put off the business of torturing Stone.

She left with the man who had offered the idea of checking with the newspaper. Their footsteps died away on shore, then the engine of one of the cars could be heard as they started it, and that died away also.

The three men she had left behind looked at each other like cats around a canary cage.

"She thinks he's lying," the first said.

"Hah, hah!" the second said.

The third man said, "Let's go outdoors and do skull exercise."

THE trio went outside and evidently conferred, for their voice murmur was audible at intervals, although at no time was a word distinguishable.

Stone squirmed enough to learn that he was tied tightly to the chair, and the chair was strong; after which he occupied his time in frowning darkly at One, the Chinaman.

One had not moved noticeably since he had been tied to the other chair, and had certainly not said anything, his Oriental visage remaining as inscrutable as the expressions on the teakwood faces of the little images for sale in the curio shops down in Chinatown.

Stone said, "I smell your fine heathen hand in this mess somewhere!"

One blinked.

"He who holds raw meat in front of a dark hole," he mumbled forlornly, "should not be surprised if a tiger comes out."

Before Stone could go further into the matter of black holes and tigers, one of the truck drivers came back.

There was sound of the other car leaving, evidently bearing the remaining two men.

"Sit still," the truck driver ordered, "and keep your mouths shut."

They sat for what seemed about seven days; but Stone, being conservative, estimated it at one hour.

Then one car came back, and the other truck pushers entered; but there was no sign of the other car, or the girl and the remaining man.

"All hotsy-totsy," one said.

He drew an iron dumbbell—the kind used for exercising—out of his pocket and put it in Stone's bound hands. "You ever see this before?"

Stone moved the iron dumbbell around in his hands looking at it.

"It's mine," he said. "From my apartment."

"You're all fixed up, then." The man took the dumbbell back.

They stuck a butcher knife point-down in the floor in front of the chair to which Stone was tied.

Then the three drivers left with both cars and the dumbbell.

CHAPTER III.

THE KITCHEN TIGER.

IT did not take Stone long to cut himself free. He stretched his stiff muscles, then went to the door and listened. It was dark and quiet. He came back to One.

"Talk tiger," he said.

The Chinaman swallowed and eyed the butcher knife, which Stone still held.

"The tiger," One pointed out uneasily, "has gone back into the black hole."

Stone, scowling, said, "If you mean that we're out of this mess, I'll bet you know better."

One winced.

"The tiger," he added, "now knows that it was not raw meat before his hole, but only an imitation made out of imagination."

Stone took a moment to figure out this around-the-bush talk.

He said, "So *you* put that want ad in the newspaper?"

One bowed his head sheepishly. "This lowly one meant well."

Stone put his fists on his hips and began yelling. He was genuinely aggravated.

"Getting me into trouble again, eh?" he shouted. "You meant well, eh? What in blazes did you mean? What'd you think you were going to accomplish?"

One looked at various corners of the barge cabin.

"We had no money," he explained gloomily. "Then I have idea about how to get some."

"I don't see where you expected that crazy advertisement you put in the newspaper to bring us any money."

One explained patiently, "This lowly one hope to use psychology. Having read in newspaper where truck driver named Mew Wheeler are dead in river, and truck by name of Dancing Dog have vanish, next thought is of advertisement to arouse interest."

Stone said, "So you advertised a hint that you knew something about the Dancing Dog to arouse interest! Whose interest, if I may ask?"

"Perhaps prospective client."

"Client?"

One sighed deeply. "This lowly one think you maybe get job as private detective."

"Private detective? Me?"

"Sure," One said hopefully. "Much better than box fighter."

Stone thought of several things he could do, including what he was tempted to do to his valet with his two fists. Well, it was cleared up, part of it anyway. And the dark, smelly cloak of the blame was hanging on exactly the hook he expected. He glowered at One.

"So you figured you'd make a private detective out of me!" he said.

One must have thought it better not to comment.

"If you think the tiger went back in his hole," Stone added, "you're more wart-headed than I think you are."

Still grumbling, Stone went to work on One's bonds with the knife. He continued to scold the pudgy little Oriental even after he had released him. Finally, with a shrug, Stone gave up. He said:

"Come on!"

THEY looked over the barge sufficiently to conclude, from an old envelope or two which they found in the cabin, that the elderly ark belonged to Olivia Marks, who also owned a missing freight truck named the Dancing Dog, which to judge from what had transpired, was the cause of all this.

There was no effort on the part of One to make conversation as, later, they climbed up a lane and turned along a road, lighting their way with a kerosene lantern they had found on the barge, a lantern that gave a minimum amount of illumination.

One carried the lantern, and he was the soul of courtesy and thoughtfulness otherwise, which probably saved embarrassment—because his overstuffed posterior presented an almost irresistible temptation to Stone's toe.

The silence was as deep as the feelings of the two pedestrians.

"Private detective!" Stone said violently.

There appeared ahead a cluster of lights that seemed profuse enough to be a village, but which turned out to be a hot dog stand that consisted mostly of streamers of electric bulbs.

They had no money, and the large greasy man who ran the dog stand refused to trust them, but did finally consent to pay a dime for Stone's belt, which had cost two dollars and a half and was still in good condition. Stone telephoned for a taxi. Then they waited.

"Private detective!" Stone gritted.

The taxicab carried them into the city, and it was a long distance, the meter registering several dollars when they finally stopped before Stone's apartment house. But the driver turned out to be a fight fan, and better still, a fan of Ed Stone's, so he was not loath to accept, in lieu of something more substantial, an I O U written on the margin of a racing form. The taxi man drove off happy.

One had gone ahead into the apartment.

He came back and met Stone at the door.

If ever there was a Chinaman who saw the dragon that symbolizes the Oriental decorative scheme, he probably wore the expression which One wore now.

"You look," Stone said, "as if you wanted to lay eggs."

One cleared his throat nervously.

"The tiger," he said, "did not go back into his hole."

"No?"

"He is in the kitchen."

Stone ran into the apartment kitchen. One seemed to have seen all of the place he cared for, and he remained behind. Stone went as far as the middle of the kitchen floor, and stood there looking.

Napoleon Bonaparte was dead on the floor.

THE actual murder had been quick—only one blow. Violence had obviously preceded it, or the stage had been carefully set so that it showed preliminary violence—Stone could not be sure which—for there was a pickle jar broken on the floor, some of the pickles stepped on and mashed messily, and the duck lay in a corner under the sink.

Stone doubled at the hips to look at the crater in the dead man's skull.

He stared for some moments, then he straightened in a hurry and went back into the other room.

"That dumbbell!" he said. "We've got to find it."

One ducked his head. "Maybe dumbbell not——"

"Of course it was," Stone snapped.

"The hole in the head is just the right size."

It was incongruously quiet in the room, the night hour being late enough that traffic sound had about ceased and the neighbors had shut down their radios and gone to bed. A few cats were having family troubles, but there was very little other noise.

Stone said savagely, "I wonder where they hid that dumbbell? Some place the cops will find it, it's a cinch."

He jerked up some cushions and moved some furniture without finding the dumbbell.

"This nervous person is wondering," One ventured, "if the man was slain before or after you were given dumbbell to handle and decorate with your fingerprints."

"After," Stone grunted. "He hasn't been dead long. There's red still running out of his nose."

"Much bad," One decided.

Ed Stone understood why he had been handed the dumbbell back on the barge. He recalled now how pleased the gunman had been after Stone had handled the thing. His prints, naturally, were all over the dumbbell, and he knew that the truck drivers had been careful enough to see that some of them were still left on the dumbbell after the murder.

It was a neat frame.

Hearing a sound, Stone went to the window and shoved the curtain aside to look down into the street.

"Not so bad," he said grimly, "but that it's getting worse. Look."

One came to the window.

"Police!"

Stone said, "Yes, police. They've been tipped off. One of the truck toolers watched for us to come back, then notified the police. We've been nicely framed."

He lunged suddenly into the bathroom, seized the shower curtain, which was rubberized, and striped it off the rod.

"We're on the second floor," he said. "Grab hold of this and I'll lower you out of the side window."

One did not argue. He went to the window.

Stone added, "When you get on the ground, chase a burglar."

"Noisy chase?" One asked.

"More noise the better."

When One reached the ground, he began yelling, "Help! Police! Burglar!" and dashed through the shrubbery which crowded the apartment house yard.

The uproar drew the policemen, and One led them toward a side street, whooping, "I fight him big in apartment. He go this way!" So that, for a few minutes, the policemen were drawn away from the apartment house.

CHAPTER IV.

TIGER BAIT.

ONE hour later, when Ed Stone telephoned his apartment, the voice of One answered.

"What about the tiger?" Stone asked.

"He purrs happily," One advised.

"You remember the place where we saw the two kids fighting last Sunday?"

"Very clearly."

"Meet me there."

The spot where they had seen the fight was a small park playground that was still and dark at this hour of the night; and after Stone had waited there for a time, a shadow appeared at his side.

"How'd you and the cops get along?" Stone asked.

"They spend much time listening to earnest lying," One advised. "Then they go away."

"What about the blood on the kitchen floor?"

"Would a burglar's nose not give forth crimson if it were to receive blow from righteous fist?"

Stone nodded grimly. "You did all right, if you satisfied 'em."

They walked across the park, feeling their way some of the time because it was so dark, until they reached Stone's automobile.

This machine was a town car of ancient vintage but passable mechanism which Stone, in a weaker moment, had permitted One to acquire for him. One had explained so earnestly that he had always longed to serve as chauffeur for a town car. Later, when they were practically hungry, One had valiantly opposed all suggestions to sell the vehicle.

Stone said, "It's a good thing we didn't have this thing in a garage outside the apartment house. Or I'd have never got it out."

One got in the back seat. He let out a yelp. Then he alighted in haste.

While the Chinese had been busy distracting the attention of the police, Ed Stone had quickly removed the dead man to the basement garage and placed him in the rear section of the car. Sight of the corpse had made One a shade of yellowish-green now.

"What'd you think I had done with it?" Stone asked sourly.

One took the driver's seat and composed himself before he spoke.

"I drive," he said.

"We'll both drive," Stone corrected, and they got the car in motion, both riding in the front seat. The machine rolled at a decorous pace through murky streets that were peaceful with silence.

Stone began to talk.

"Mew Wheeler and Napoleon must have made the truck named Dancing Dog disappear," he said. "Then Mew Wheeler got himself killed. He was tortured, so I don't think Napoleon did it. He was tortured because somebody wanted to learn something, but I don't think they learned it."

He glanced sidewise at One.

"Then we advertised," he added, "and got in it."

One kept a meek silence.

Stone continued, "Napoleon read the advertisement, and it puzzled him, so he started following me around. I sidetracked him. The truck drivers read the ad, too, and they came to see us. I told them about Napoleon. That was the first time they realized Napoleon was Mew Wheeler's partner.

"So they go get him, torture him until they get their information, then kill him. They got their information. They wouldn't have killed him if they hadn't."

He paused to think back and decide how convincing was the reasoning he had advanced.

"So they farm Napoleon's murder out to us," he finished.

ONE steered the car. Stone gave low-voiced directions from time to time. Clouds were coming into the sky, and it was getting darker, so that the town car headlights gave the impression of throwing an incredible amount of light. The engine, which had always seemed almost soundless during the daytime, made some noise in the night stillness—tappet clickings, faintly bell-

Save several cents a pack! Try Avalon Cigarettes! Cellophane wrap. Union made.

like carbon knocking, and once in a while a whinnying complaint from a spring which needed greasing.

"You go to barge," One decided.

"Right," Stone agreed.

"Tiger's den."

"I know," Stone said.

"Maybe much bad."

"It'll be interesting," Stone said, "to see if it can get any worse."

One subsided, and two wrinkles on his grapefruit of a forehead remained to indicate a doubt roosting in his mind, a doubt evidently as dark as a buzzard.

Stone stopped the car near the barge. It was black night.

"That tiger," Stone reminded One.

"Yes."

"We'll put a firecracker in his den."

One sighed uneasily. He was not enthusiastic about dead men, particularly a dead man who was an anchor that might fasten them in a penitentiary for no-telling-how-many years. Finally, he got from behind the wheel and reached for the rear door.

After they had planted in the barge cabin the body of the man they knew only by the name he had given during the pickpocket incident, Napoleon Bonaparte, they concealed their car down the road a short distance, then returned to the barge to wait.

"I grow unhappy about this," One confided.

"Swell," Stone said. "So'll the truck drivers, when they see their frame isn't around the same picture."

"You think they will come here?"

"Sure. They'll figure we might do something like this."

"But if they do not come?"

"Then," Stone said, "we haven't hurt ourselves any."

It must have been close to three o'clock in the morning when one of the truck drivers came back.

THE trucker had a flashlight, which he did not use, and an ability to move as quietly as a tabby cat stalking a pigeon, which he did employ. He was at Stone's elbow before they dreamed of his presence. It was a good thing that a breeze had started pushing river waves against the shore and making a little sound.

Stone waited, listened and decided the man might not be alone. So he let the fellow go on across the dock and step on the barge and go inside the cabin that was like a small land-house. The flashlight gave out illumination, and the man contributed a startled noise an instant later. He had seen the body.

The man shot out of the barge cabin, hit the wharf and went away hammering the ground with his feet.

"Our bird is flown away," One said gloomily.

"I'll bet he's a carrier pigeon," Stone said.

He was. He came back shortly, another man in tow, and they galloped into the barge deck house.

"You like to fight?" Stone breathed.

"No!" One said instantly.

Stone took his valet by the ear. "Then you're going to have your chance to learn. We played smart, and didn't hurry, and now we know there are two of them here. So we know how many we have to take."

"Me no like fight," One insisted.

"This whole thing is your egg, and you'll help hatch it."

They started out on the dock, and Stone's ankle turned on a round stick which proved to be about three feet broken off a boat hook shaft; so he took that along, and posting himself outside the door of the barge cabin, waited until the truck drivers should come out.

"I knowed," one of the drivers was saying, "that the blasted palooka would try to work a gimmick on us. I knowed as soon as we found out the cops didn't get no body when they cased his apartment."

"It's lucky," the other man said, "that we stuck around to see how the frame-up came out."

The other man was proud. "Whose idea was that but mine?"

THEN they came out, both of them together, carrying the body. Stone's fragment of boat hook made a satisfactory sound on a head, but the victim did not react properly. He jumped back and clawed for a gun.

Stone, thinking that was what he got for not depending on his fists, lunged. He put the man against the wall with a hook, straightened him with a touching left, then hung a hard right on his jaw. The man fell the way they dropped in the ring.

Stone turned.

One was working Oriental magic on the other man. He had offered his small self, apparently an easy victim, and the man had seized him. Then One had leaped into the air, and when they came down the opponent's head was the first thing to hit the floor. The foe relaxed.

"I thought you couldn't fight," Stone said.

"Me no *like* to fight," One corrected.

Stone carried the victims into the barge shack, threw them into the chairs and fastened them there with the ropes which earlier in the night had held himself and One. By that time, the two prisoners showed signs of waking.

"We'll hammer them a little," Stone explained, "and see what kind of words come out."

He was not displeased with himself. He knew enough about what fists could do to a man's determination not to talk to feel certain they were close to learning the truth.

"You see," he said cheerfully, "it was darn thoughtful of us to wait and learn that only two of them came to see if the body was——"

Stone did not finish, being too busy watching the gun that had appeared in the door. The gun was followed by one of the truck drivers, the most vicious-looking of the lot.

"There was more than two," the third truck driver said.

CHAPTER V.

THE MILK OF THE TIGER.

THEY made Stone and One carry the body of Napoleon Bonaparte. The carrying was no more pleasant because both Stone and One were knocked down and kicked by the first two truck drivers after their partner had cut them loose from the chair.

They put the body in the car in which the truckers had come. It was a sedan.

Stone and One were tied and shoved into the sedan.

Two captors rode in the back with them, guns drawn. The third drove.

"Where to?" he asked.

"The place Napoleon Bonaparte told us about," one of the others said grimly.

"Think that's safe?"

"Why shouldn't it be?"

The car rolled swiftly, following a concrete thoroughfare for a time, then turning onto a highway that was evidently rutted blacktop, and finally onto a hilly dirt road. This was rough and disused. Brush crowded it close.

Stone had been thinking.

"His name wasn't *really* Napoleon Bonaparte?" he asked.

"Sure," one of the men said. "Only the Napoleon was silent. He always tried to make 'em call him Bob N. Bonaparte. Can you imagine callin' that little fat runt 'Bob'?"

Stone did not say anything. He listened to the gears grind as the car climbed the hills. Branches scraped the machine and dew, shaken from the leaves, smeared the windows damply. He saw this, from time to time, when the men splashed flashlight illumination to learn if the captives were still tied.

The truck started to turn off the road, but stopped before it had completed the turn.

The driver honked.

A few moments later, the driver called, "We're lost. I wonder if you can direct us."

The men watching Stone and One stiffened at that.

"Sure," a voice near by said. "I'll direct you."

The speaker came closer.

"What the hell?" he growled. "I thought it was some stranger."

"Well, we didn't know," the driver told him. "What's the good word?"

The man outside was the other truckman.

"The truck is here," he said. "It's still got the load. I guess the farm belonged to Napoleon, like he said. The mailbox says Bob N. Bonaparte."

"Anybody live here?"

"Nope."

"What about the girl?"

"She must've seen a hanging sometime, the way she's been describing what'll happen to us."

There was a just-stepped-in-ice-water silence, until one of the men made a laugh, after which the others managed to echo it. Then they got out.

Stone and One were dragged into the barn. A man put a match to a gasoline lantern. The lantern flared up, its light growing, and Stone saw Olivia Marks.

The girl was tied hand and foot.

STONE swung a glance around and located the truck. He was interested in the truck.

It was a big machine, one of the multiple-wheeled transport type with separate cab and motor, and a huge van of a trailer hooked on behind. A thing so big that the type was rapidly being barred off the highways built by the people's money of other States. The name of the truck was on the cab door.

Dancing Dog.

The name did not seem appropriate, but no more so than the names given other things.

Stone, after looking at the truck, became suddenly animated. They had thrown him on the hay-covered floor of the barn, and he was still tied. He began to flounce and twist and squirm, throwing himself toward the rear of the truck, and eventually reached his objective.

The men watched him, curious, their guns ready; but they seemed enough interested in knowing what he might be trying to do to let him go ahead.

The van doors were open. Stone reared up—something like a seal looking for a fish, he thought grimly—and looked.

Then, just as industriously as he

had flopped to the back of the truck, he navigated his way back to his starting point.

"It's empty," he said.

The girl answered.

"Yes," she said. "It was coming back from Canada without a load when it disappeared."

Her words cleared up in Stone's mind the point that had been puzzling him.

"Canada? That means smuggling, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Diamonds," she said. "I just found it out."

Stone said, "Then you didn't know what they were doing with your trucks?"

He really believed that, and did not need the tone of the girl's voice to convince him. In fact, his mind was already on something else while she spoke. One of the men came over and dug at his ribs with a toe, interrupting his thoughts.

"We don't get you," the man said.

"I'd like to know what you call this, then," Stone grumbled.

"I don't mean that. What we don't get is where you hook into this. Who are you?"

"The victim of some tiger baiting," Stone said.

THE man scowled. He was in earnest. "You know what?" he continued. "We figure you were the fence. All of us, Mew included, have been bringing in stuff for some time, and we had a regular buyer. We knew Mew had this friend, Napoleon Bonaparte, but we never thought of him when the truck disappeared.

"Mew kept sayin' he didn't know where the truck was, but we didn't believe him, an' then he died while we was torturin' him. Bonaparte told us, all right, when we got 'im. Like I say, we figure you were the monkey who was gonna sell the sparklers for 'em."

The man stopped suddenly and

If you like this story, you'll be thrilled by Kenneth Robeson's book-length novel of Doc Savage and his fighting companions, which appears every month in *Doc Savage Magazine.*

EVERY MONTH
10¢
SCIENCE AND FIGHTING SKILL IN A RUGGED THRILL PACKED ADVENTURE NOVEL IN EVERY ISSUE.
DOC SAVAGE MAGAZINE
THE MODERN MAGAZINE FOR MODERN READERS

kicked Stone. For Stone was not listening. He had been weighing things, deciding whether to make the break he was planning, trying to figure his chances of being shot before he won out. And he knew it was a mistake to think about it, because he was getting appalled by the slimness of his chances, and cold with fright.

Much earlier in the night, he had thrust a small butcher knife down his trousers leg. He had shoved the blade through the leg of his underwear, on the inside, and it had hung there unnoticeably, for it was a flat knife.

His action in flouncing back to the end of the truck to look had been really to tear the knife free of its underwear scabbard. The blade had slipped down his leg, and now it was in the hay beneath him, and as he lay on his back, his fingers were about the hilt. He moved slightly, inserted the knife beneath the ropes.

"You better turn the girl loose," he said.

The man shook his head. "We can't turn anybody loose. The girl or you or the Chinaman, or nobody."

Stone looked at the girl. "Why did they grab you?"

"I began to suspect them and eavesdropped," the girl said. "I overheard too much, and they caught me." Her control slipped, and she said suddenly, wildly, *"They're going to kill us!"*

While they were looking at her, Stone cut his wrists loose.

HE slashed his ankles free an instant later. Then, without getting up, he rolled over and speared the leg of the man who stood closest. The fellow shrieked, tried to jump away, but the knife had separated enough muscles in his leg that he fell. Stone rolled on to him, and got the man's gun.

The gasoline lantern hung from a joist. Stone shot at it. He was no gunman, but the lantern was not far away and he hit it. The bullet split the fuel reservoir, splashed gasoline up through the chimney, which the slug also ripped. Flame enveloped the lantern with a coughing noise, and it fell to the floor.

Fire rushed through the loose hay.

There were three men left. Stone shot one of them, but not fatally, for the victim first fell down, then got up and tumbled into a manger. The other two men ran around behind the smoke.

Stone seized the girl, carried her to the door and pushed her clear.

One was rolling to the door, and he came through it directly behind Stone.

Stone said, "We oughta throw you back in your tiger den!" He cut the Chinaman's wrists loose, then gave him the knife, ordering, "Get the ropes off the girl!"

They had turned the truck lights on, and these blazed at the door. Any attempt to shoot through the door would be suicide. Then Stone remembered the cracks, and watched them.

When he saw a shadow passing the cracks, and knew one of the men was slinking along inside, he pointed his gun at the barn boards at the spot and pulled the trigger. The bullet went through, for the man screamed and sank.

The truck starter began to whine. It ground on and on and the motor did not start.

Stone moved the girl back. There was a wood pile in the farm lot, and he placed himself behind that.

The truck motor had not begun to run, and finally the starter motor quit whining, battery exhausted.

An occasional flame was jumping out of the barn door. Some climbed, yellowish from burning hay, in great masses. Firelight flickered over the barnyard.

WHEN Stone got out of jail—he had learned to his pained astonishment that they could lock you up as a material witness even if you had convinced everybody you were not guilty—he went home and found Olivia Marks waiting in his apartment.

"You all right?" he asked.

"I'm everlastingly grateful to you," she said warmly.

He could see that she was all right. In fact, she was better than all right. Obviously they hadn't locked her up, for she had changed clothes since he had last seen her and she was—well, she was all right.

She took his mind off what he had been thinking about policemen who locked up an innocent man.

"We haven't had breakfast, have we?" he asked.

"They found the diamonds in the truck," she said. "They weren't harmed by the fire."

One, the valet, came in before Stone could remind her he had asked about breakfast.

"Aren't they going to keep you in jail?" Stone asked.

One shook his head smilingly. "The four truck drivers are not going to die. But one of them think so, and he are make statement sending dove of inocence to roost where it should roost."

One put a slip of paper in front of Stone.

"What's this?" Stone demanded.

"Much money," one said.

The girl explained, "You know that anyone who puts goods being smuggled into the hands of the government officers, gets a part of the value of the merchandise as a reward. Well, that piece of paper is a receipt saying the government got the diamonds from you. Later, you'll get your cut."

Stone thought that over. He was pleasantly surprised. The thought of all this mix-up paying a dividend hadn't occurred to him.

One, the valet, spoke.

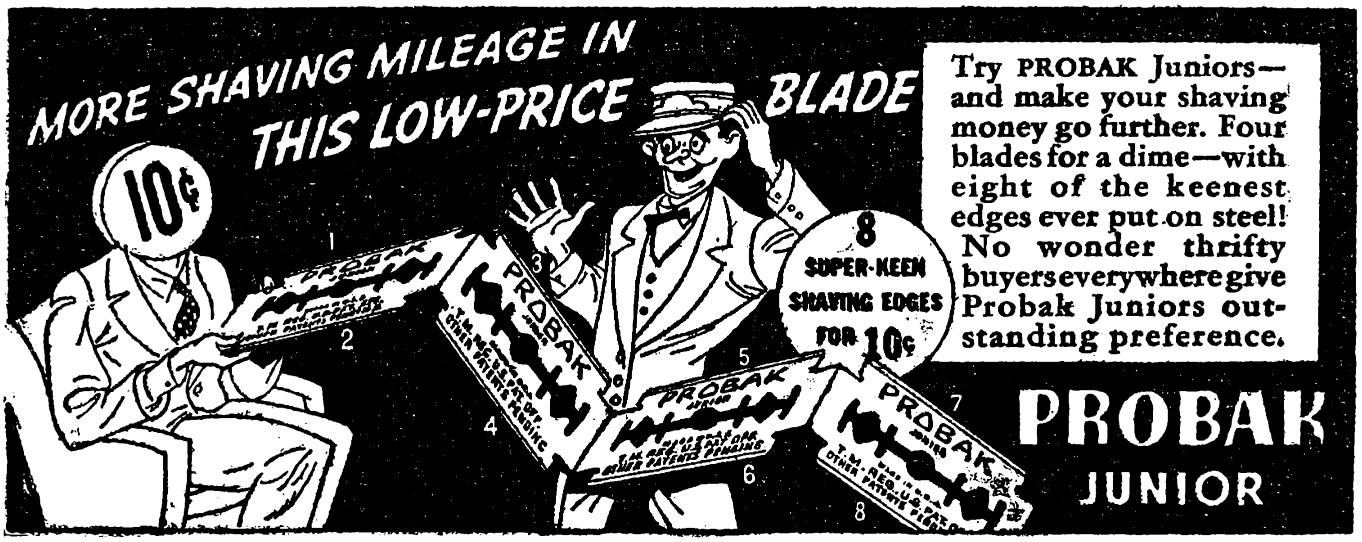
"Many thousand dollars," he said.

Stone went over and took One by the necktie.

"No more tigers!" he said grimly. "You hear?"

One nodded meekly—with one eye on the reward receipt.

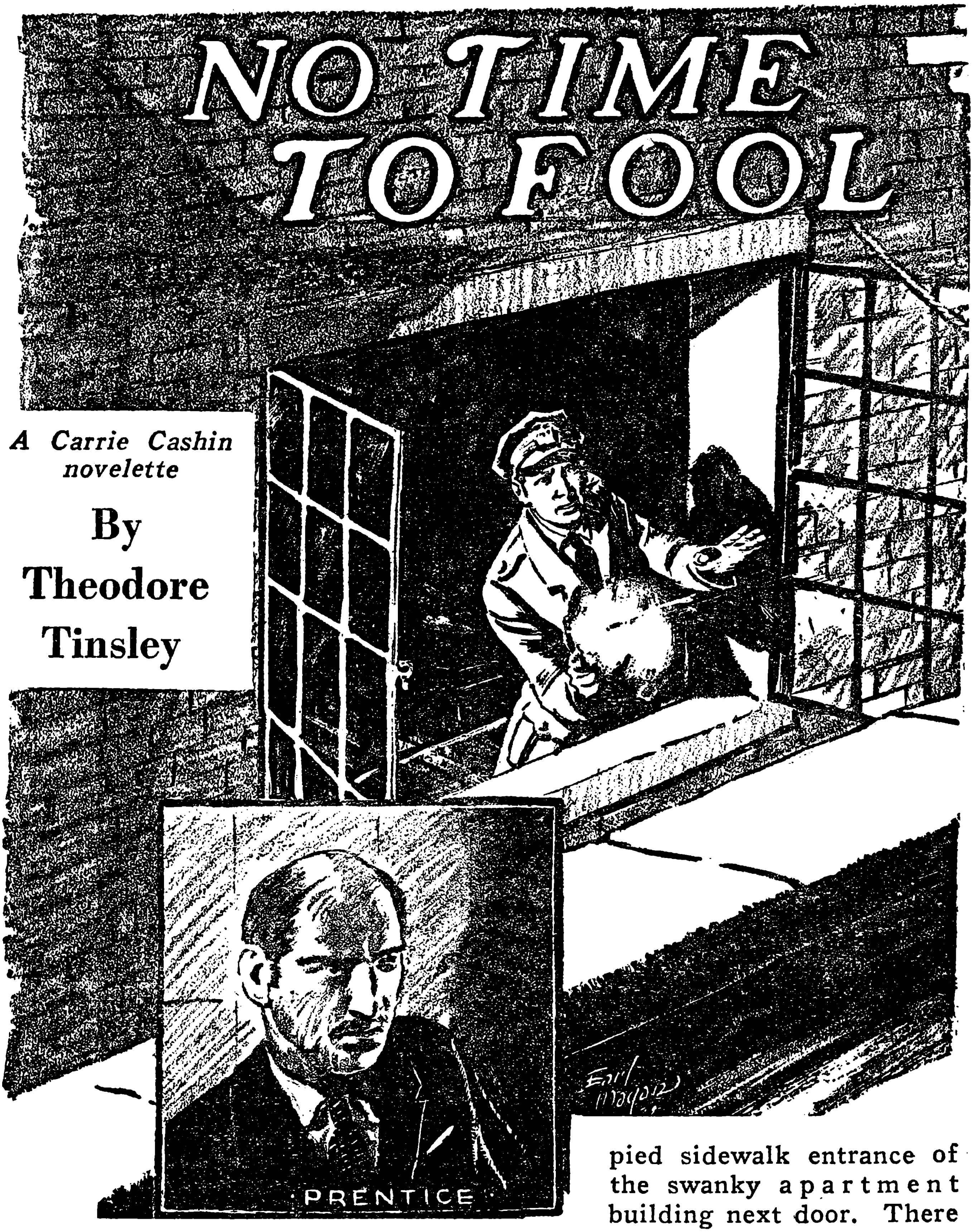
"But tigers give milk," he pointed out.


MORE SHAVING MILEAGE IN THIS LOW-PRICE BLADE
10¢
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
PROBAK
8 SUPER-KEEN SHAVING EDGES FOR 10¢
PROBAK JUNIOR
Try PROBAK Juniors—and make your shaving money go further. Four blades for a dime—with eight of the keenest edges ever put on steel! No wonder thrifty buyers everywhere give Probak Juniors outstanding preference.

NO TIME TO FOOL

A Carrie Cashin novelette

By Theodore Tinsley



CHAPTER I.

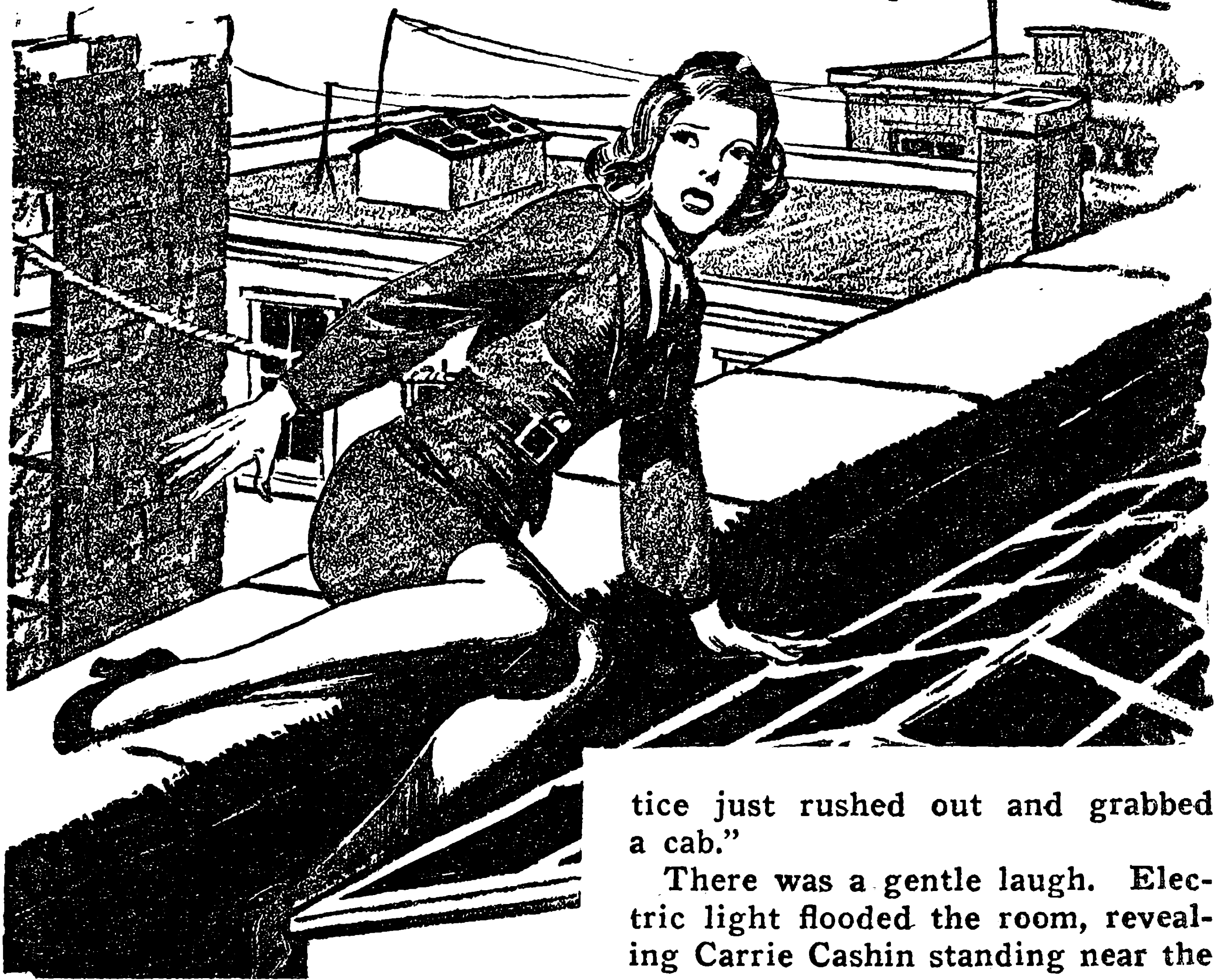
CARRIE ROBS A SAFE.

THE top-floor apartment was pitch dark. Aleck had raised the window from the bottom. His face projected cautiously over the sill, peering downward at the street.

His gaze was riveted on the canopied sidewalk entrance of the swanky apartment building next door. There was patience in his lean, good-looking face. He was not one of the smartest detectives in New York, but he was certainly a most dependable assistant to the unusual woman for whom he worked.

Aleck would have argued with you if you had called Carrie Cashin a woman. To him, she was a slim,

Lead bullets and diamond bracelets, Carrie Cashin and Aleck—all mixed up in a whirlwind tale of a crook clean-up!



pretty girl who looked as if she had recently graduated from high school. The fact that she wore a tiny-calibered gun in a garter holster, was an adept at jujutsu, and had organized the most successful private detective agency in New York—well, she was still demure as far as Aleck was concerned.

He kept watching the apartment house next door. Presently, a man emerged from the canopied entrance and walked swiftly to the curb. The doorman's whistle shrilled. The man entered a taxicab and was driven hastily away.

Aleck closed his window quietly. He drew down the shade. Turning in the darkness, he said huskily:

"The gag worked! Harvey Prentice just rushed out and grabbed a cab."

There was a gentle laugh. Electric light flooded the room, revealing Carrie Cashin standing near the door.

"Let's go."

Her calm voice didn't fool Aleck. The tougher things got, the calmer Carrie's voice became. And the tailored suit from Fifth Avenue that she was wearing also meant trouble ahead. The short tweed skirt was designed to give Carrie plenty of leg room. The jacket had deep leather-lined pockets that contained tools in which the police would have been interested. And Carrie's thick waistline looked as though she had allowed herself to become careless about her diet.

"What about Prentice's valet?" Aleck asked, worried.

"Tonight's his night off."

"He might have returned through the servant's entrance."

Carrie answered that by picking up the telephone. She called the number of Prentice's apartment. There was no answer to the ring.

Carrie and Aleck left the apartment, locking the door behind them. There was an elevator in the building, but Carrie led the way to a flight of fireproofed stairs. Hurrying upward, she unbolted a smooth steel door. Aleck followed her to the breezy darkness of the roof.

It was the same level as the roof of the building next door. But there was a grim, empty barrier in between. A deep air shaft cut like a dizzy chasm between the two buildings. It was far too wide to leap.

ALECK had arranged about that. He lifted a long plank he had concealed under the shadow of the stone coping. He tilted the plank outward until it joined the opposite roof like a frail bridge. Carrie kept her eyes averted from the black depths of the shaft.

"As soon as I cross over, you scram as fast as you can to the rear courtyard. I don't expect trouble after I swing into Prentice's window. But if there should be danger, I'll toss the bracelet down to you. Meet me with the sedan, outside the next uptown subway station."

"But suppose——"

Carrie didn't reply. She knelt on the outthrust plank, gripping the edges with both hands. Her face was pale, but her steady eyes looked neither up nor down. She moved swiftly across the dizzy chasm. A moment later, she was swinging the light but strong plank to where she stood. She hid it in shadow, marking the coping with a tiny chalk scrawl.

Aleck had vanished, obedient to Carrie's orders. She unbuttoned her tight jacket, and the cause of the peculiar bulge around her waist became evident. She was wearing a looping of rope about her body.

She removed it. It was more like stout cord than rope. But it was pliable and strong. Carrie had tested its tensile strength beforehand with a weight double her own. Fastening one end to a leather harness under her jacket, she moved toward a dark chimney that loomed close to the rear edge of the roof. Directly below was the top-floor apartment of Harvey Prentice.

The rope method was the only feasible way to enter Prentice's apartment. The roof door was smooth, with the bolt mechanism on the inside. An impossible task to jimmy it open without noise. And noise was the last thing Carrie Cashin wanted tonight!

She worked carefully, knotting the free end of the rope around the chimney. Her life depended on that line! And the importance of success was enormous.

Her client was beautiful Eve Dillman, wife of a prominent investment banker. Dillman, a collector of rare, historical jewels, had given his glamorous wife as a birthday gift the magnificent Versailles Bracelet, which King Louis of France had presented centuries ago to the gorgeous Madame de Pompadour. There were twenty-four diamonds set in a double row around the gold circlet, each perfectly matched, each a flawless stone.

The bracelet was hidden in the safe of Harvey Prentice.

PRENTICE was a jeweler who used his respectable business as a "front" for blackmail. Eve Dillman had found that out—when it was too late. She had needed money badly to pay a scandalous debt of her young and reckless son. Her own account was overdrawn, and she dared not ask her husband for so large a sum. He had threatened to disinherit the boy if he got into another scrape. So Eve went to Prentice with the priceless Versailles Bracelet.

The jeweler made her a clever duplicate. He kept the original as security for his loan. At the end of the month, when Eve Dillman received her allowance, she returned with the fifty per-cent interest that Prentice had demanded. But the wily jeweler laughed at his victim.

The ransom sum he named was staggering. It was more than the frightened Eve could raise. To add to her terror, she had received a telegram that morning from her husband, who had gone to Chicago. He was on the way back to New York with Caleb Markham, an expert on historical gems.

Dillman had promised to show Markham the magnificent Versailles Bracelet. Eve had been able to fool her husband with the replica, but she knew the eye of a gem expert would detect the fraud instantly. It would mean disgrace for her and ruin for her son!

Carrie Cashin, poised at the black edge of the roof, glanced at the radium glow of her wrist watch. Dillman and the gem expert were due to arrive at Grand Central in seventy minutes. Ten minutes more would bring them from the station to the Dillman mansion.

Carrie had pledged her word to Eve Dillman that she'd be there first!

She drew her life line taut from the chimney. She descended slowly into space, paying out inch by inch the free coil of the rope that dangled between her taut hands and the leather belt around her body.

The strain was terrific. She could feel moisture oozing out of her aching palms. She tried to hurry her descent. Her dangling legs were passing the top of Harvey Prentice's window when her left hand slipped! She clutched dizzily with the right—and the rope burned through her fingers!

Her body fell like a stone.

FOR an instant, she felt sickening nausea. Then, like the snap of a whip, her safety belt checked the fall. It cut into Carrie's waist like a red-hot knife. But the taut rope held! Dangling like a bug in mid-air, Carrie twisted her body with a thrust of her foot against the face of the building. She glared upward at the sill of Harvey Prentice's dark window.

She was below it, but not hopelessly so. She hooked her upraised finger tips over the stone, then her damp palms. Inch by inch, she chinned herself, forced her spreading elbows apart. Her lifted knee gave her an anchorage on the narrow sill.

But she didn't breathe freely until she planted the other knee and clawed herself to her feet. Her hand darted into one of the pockets of her jacket. She made four barely audible scratches around the edges of the windowpane with a diamond cutter. Then she pushed inward against the glass.

The glass broke in an even square and dropped on a rug. A moment later, Carrie had released the end of the rope from her safety belt and was lowering herself into Harvey Prentice's living room.

She was careful not to step on the flat piece of glass. She waited in complete darkness, listening intently. There was not a sound. Drawing down the shade behind her, she flooded Prentice's living room with electric light.

It was luxuriously furnished. But only two things interested the breathless girl. One was the large, old-fashioned safe. The other was the telephone.

Carrie attended to the telephone first. With a pair of steel cutters taken from one of her leather-lined pockets, she sheared through the wire close to the baseboard. Then she dropped to her knees in front of the formidable-looking dial of the safe.

Eve Dillman had described this safe. The size of the combination dial made Carrie Cashin smile. It was proof of the safe's vulnerability to sensitive finger tips and sharp ears. They didn't make old-fashioned tumbler dials like that any more. Prentice's ingrained miserliness had caused him to keep an outmoded strong box that offered no difficulties to an expert.

Carrie proved it by clicking the lock tumblers into rigidity in less than six minutes. She swung open the ponderous door.

A gun muzzle met her startled gaze!

CHAPTER II.

SUBWAY ESCAPE.

HARVEY PRENTICE was crouched in the empty safe. He sprang out swiftly before Carrie's brain could telegraph an impulse to her empty hands. She had faced enough killers in her career as a crime buster to recognize death when it menaced her. Her empty palms lifted above her head.

Prentice laughed. He had a sharp, foxlike nose and a cruel mouth. His legs were thin, his stomach fat and bloated. He looked like a human spider behind the barrel of his aimed gun. He said:

"Good evening, Miss Cashin. As you see, I expected you. My valet was clever enough to trail Eve Dillman to your agency office. Having learned something of your reputation for trouble-making, I decided to hand you over to the police for burglary. So I left hurriedly in a taxicab—and returned within five minutes through a side door of the lobby downstairs. I had no desire to be killed in a gun fight on even terms, so I locked myself in the safe when I heard your footsteps on the roof above. You must admit I've made a complete fool of you."

Carrie watched him rigidly.

"You're bluffing," she said. "You can't afford to bring police into this slimy racket of yours. It will brand you as a blackmailer. Eve Dillman will testify against you."

"Like hell, she will," Prentice growled. "Her first payment was in cash. I'll simply tell the police that she paid *nothing,* therefore I held the bracelet as legitimate collateral for a legitimate loan. She has no proof of blackmail."

His shrill laughter purred.

"She's not the only sucker on my list. The news of her disaster will be a grim warning to the rest to pay up without a squawk. And the police will act as my collecting agency!"

He backed toward the telephone.

"There's a cop at the switchboard downstairs. I told the police I expected burglary tonight. There's another cop watching the rear courtyard in case—as I suspect—you've planted that assistant of yours down below as a lookout."

His left hand snatched up the telephone.

"Hello?"

There was no answer. Carrie's palms were still lifted above her head, but the right had sunk gradually lower. Her tilted body lowered it still farther.

"You're out of luck, Mr. Prentice," she said tonelessly. "I've cut the wire."

He had realized it a second before she spoke. Her words confirmed his own shrewd guess. It was a double psychological impact. Instinctively, his thin profile swung toward the baseboard where the severed wire jutted.

IN that swift instant, Carrie's body bent. Her hand snatched her tiny-calibered palm gun from its garter holster. She fired with almost the same motion. It was spot shooting, aimed at the glitter of Prentice's big weapon. She missed hitting the gun, but the slug drilled through the jeweler's wrist. He uttered a shrill yelp of pain and his weapon fell to the floor.

Carrie kicked it away. She ducked a smash at her jaw and tightened her forearm around Prentice's throat, in a headlock. She fell headlong with him to the floor. The crack of his heel against her shin brought tears of agony to her eyes, but she held her grip. It enabled her to roll him on his back.

Her elbow rammed grimly downward at a spot below Prentice's breastbone. The sound the jeweler uttered was more like a whistling gasp than a scream. Carrie's elbow had paralyzed a nerve center. Prentice's diaphragm fluttered. He was unable to draw air into his agonized lungs.

He writhed helplessly on the floor. Carrie hurdled him and darted toward the wall. Her steel shears clipped a second time through the telephone wire that stretched toward the outlet box. She ripped the wire loose and cut it into two even lengths.

The wire was thin and pliable. Carrie tightened it immovably about the ankles and wrists of the disabled jeweler. Prentice's own handkerchief jammed his tongue back into his throat.

Carrie darted to the open safe and searched it. She found no trace of the Versailles Bracelet which Eve Dillman had told her was in a flat leather box.

BUT Carrie wasn't baffled for more than ten seconds. The bracelet must be in the apartment! Prentice would be afraid to leave so valuable a trophy out of his sight. She whirled back toward the fettered jeweler and unbuttoned his coat. She knew her hunch was right as she saw the stony hate in the man's bulging eyes.

The flat leather case was tucked in the blackmailer's inside pocket. The lid flew open when Carrie's finger touched a small button. She gasped at the incredible loveliness of the historic bracelet. The matched diamonds flashed like twin circles of living flame around the soft, old-fashioned gold of the heirloom. A king of France had taxed a nation to buy that magnificent bracelet. The smooth, lovely arm of Madame de Pompadour had worn it.

Carrie stared at it spellbound.

She recovered with a gasp. Turning, she darted toward the rear window. Her hunch was to get rid of the bracelet at once. Prentice had boasted that there was a policeman waiting down in the lobby. Suppose he had telephoned up and found that the wire was cut! Perhaps he was already ascending swiftly in the elevator, ready to shoot it out with a burglar!

Carrie snapped up the window shade. She peered downward into the shadowy rear courtyard. She could see Aleck waiting far below. His face was lifted in a white blur. He waved an arm reassuringly.

But Carrie hesitated. She had seen a vague movement in the darkness behind Aleck.

A figure plunged suddenly into view. Carrie, watching tensely from above, uttered a cry of dismay. She saw the sheen of brass buttons, the blur of an upraised police nightstick.

HER scream warned Aleck. He spun to meet the attack. The descending nightstick missed Aleck's ducking head. It cut a harmless swath through the air. The fierce energy behind the blow threw the cop off balance.

But his left hand caught Aleck's collar. There was a swift, deadly struggle. Aleck was a tough customer in a rough-and-tumble fight. And he was desperate with the desire to escape. How it happened Carrie never knew—but the nightstick suddenly changed hands. It struck the cop a glancing blow that knocked his cap flying and sent him sliding to his knees on the concrete.

Aleck raced pell-mell toward the board fence in the rear.

As he squirmed over the top, the policeman on the ground came to his knees. The roar of bullets made thunderous echoes in the darkness. But the shooting was too fast to be accurate. Aleck dropped unhurt to the other side.

The cop was already in pursuit. He vaulted over the fence and raced onward through the rear yard. He sprang down cellar steps almost on the heels of Aleck.

Carrie darted back from the window of Prentice's top-floor apartment. The brown-leather jewel case was no longer in her hand. She had thrust it down the front of her dress. It was tucked securely under her brassiere.

She raced past the trussed jeweler toward the apartment door. But she didn't take more than six steps. A thunderous crash at the door made it quiver on its hinges. A voice outside roared a grim command.

"Police! Open that door, or I'll blow the lock off!"

CARRIE'S heart gave a quick, fluttering leap. Then it steadied, as it always did when danger was worst. Turning, she retreated on tiptoe to the only escape left to her—the window high above the rear courtyard.

She could hear police bullets smashing at the lock of the apartment's front door. Carrie's fear that the cop at the lobby switchboard might phone upstairs and become aware of the cut telephone wire was now grim reality.

The thin life line by which she had descended from the roof still hung vertically, outside the window. But standing on the sill, with her face slanted desperately upward, Carrie knew she couldn't make the steep climb! Her feminine muscles were not equal to that heart-straining task.

Her glance moved to the left. She saw something that offered a slim ray of hope. She had noticed the tiny stone balcony before she had descended from the roof, but had not attempted to use it because it was too far from the open window. Now it offered her *only* chance to escape.

It was not exactly a balcony. It was an architectural decoration on the flat rear wall of the towering apartment house. There was one on every floor, with a stone railing and a bronze gargoyle leering from a metal plaque above. From the gargoyle's head to the roof was an easy jump. But the balcony rail was six feet to the left of Prentice's window, and at least three feet higher!

The cop outside the apartment door ended Carrie's hesitation. She heard the crash as his bullets blasted away the lock.

She fastened the dangling rope to her leather belt. She kicked sideways from the sill with all her strength. As she swung into space like a human pendulum, her body twisted and she threw her legs high. Her intent was to hook the rail of the balcony, but she missed. She crashed back against the framework of the window.

Again she tried. This time one upflung leg found its goal. Her short dress was no impediment. She hung, hooked upside down like an acrobat.

In an instant, Carrie's hands strengthened her grip. She squirmed over the stone railing. The quick slash of a knife cut the rope loose from her belt. With a sobbing breath, she clutched at the bronze head of the gargoyle that topped the balcony.

AS she did so, a policeman's head poked out of Prentice's window. He yelled and pointed his gun. Carrie's hands hooked over the edge of the roof. She leaped upward with a lithe inward bend of her body.

A bullet chipped the bronze snout of the gargoyle. Another pierced the wind-blown blur of Carrie's skirt. Then she was over the edge of the roof.

The air shaft plank lay exactly where she had hidden it. She tilted it outward and dropped it flat across the yawning chasm between the two buildings. She crossed it like a dark streak on hands and knees. Then she sent the board flying from its anchorage. It vanished down the blackness of the air shaft.

The echo of its crash far below was topped by the roar of a gun. The pursuing cop had emerged from the roof door. He was just in time to see Carrie vanish down the fire stairs beyond an impassible gulf.

Again she was in a desperate race for freedom. The cop in one apartment house—she in the other!

Carrie didn't bother with the elevator until she reached the fourth floor. Then her finger pressed the call button. The elevator began to rise. The panting girl raced back to the stairs.

The lobby was empty, as she had anticipated. She slowed down her mad pace as she emerged on the street.

There was a subway kiosk on the corner. Carrie had examined it and the station below before she had started her dangerous adventure. She left nothing to chance. But as she reached the steps, she heard a grim shout behind her. The pursuing cop had reached the street.

Carrie raced pell-mell into the subway.

She vaulted the turnstile and darted across the mezzanine floor, where the change booth was located. Down below were two island platforms. Carrie descended to the northbound platform. Two trains were motionless there; one was a northbound local, the other an express.

Carrie walked quietly into the crowded local.

THE policeman, guided by the shout of the change booth man, reached the island platform an instant later. There was no sign of the vanished girl. He clutched at the arm of a man standing on the platform and shot a fierce question at him. For an instant, the man looked startled. Then he nodded eagerly. He pointed to the express. The cop leaped aboard just as the doors closed. The express roared away through the black tunnel.

The man who had lied to the cop boarded the local into which he had seen Carrie vanish. But he was careful to enter it two cars away from where the girl entered.

There was a sly gleam in his pale eyes. He chuckled faintly.

He was a short, hammered-down sort of man, with a faintly British appearance. His name was Bert Fanning. He was Harvey Prentice's shrewd valet. Prentice had posted him outside as a lookout.

When the local train stopped at the next station, Bert Fanning peered foxily. He saw Carrie emerge two cars away. The valet was closer to the two exit staircases than Carrie was. He made sure toward which flight of steps she was heading; Then, he took the other.

Emerging above, he glanced across the street. There was a taxicab parked at the curb. Fanning recognized the lean-jawed man with the broad shoulders who sat nervously on the rear seat, watching the exit through which Carrie would soon appear. The man was Aleck.

Fanning hailed another cab. He slipped the driver a ten-dollar bill.

"Drive me to Central Park West, and then take the transverse road that cuts through the park."

The driver nodded with alacrity. A ten-dollar fare was something that didn't happen very often in his life. He sent the taxi racing away.

CHAPTER III.

LOST FORTUNE.

THE cab was gone by the time Carrie Cashin emerged from the subway. She glanced with surprise at the taxi in which Aleck sat anxiously waiting. She had expected to see her own swift sedan.

But her face was expressionless as she climbed in.

"Did you get the Versailles Bracelet?" Aleck whispered.

"Yes."

"Thank God! I was afraid that you——"

"What happened to my sedan?"

"I had to switch. I socked the cop when he chased me into that rear cellar. But he came staggering out before I could make a clean get-away. I don't think he saw the sedan's plates, but I didn't take any chances. I parked it in a garage and grabbed a taxi."

Carrie's smile deepened. She was proud of Aleck, pleased with the way he had eluded capture. But praise always embarrassed Aleck. So she frowned and pretended disgust.

"At least you could have picked a cleaner taxicab. Look at the dust! And there's a hole in the seat upholstery! A fine ladies' man you are!"

Aleck grinned. Carrie never fussed unless she was pleased.

The cab was rolling slowly ahead.

"We've still got half an hour to get to Mrs. Dillman's home," Carrie said, "before her husband arrives at Grand Central with that darned jewel expert from Chicago. Time enough to make a frightened woman very happy—to say nothing of earning a generous fee."

She leaned forward to the cab driver, her voice louder.

"Over to Central Park West,

please. We want to drive through the transverse road across to Fifth Avenue."

A moment later, the cab was spinning smoothly through the walled cut. There was no traffic. The taxi's speed increased. But, suddenly, as the shadow of an overhead bridge approached, the driver gave a shrill, startled cry. He jammed on his brakes. He hadn't noticed the man ahead until almost the last instant. The bridge that carried Central Park's traffic across the sunken transverse road threw deep black shadows on the man's crumpled body. He was lying in the middle of the pavement.

The taxi halted with a scream of locked brakes. The instant it did so, a quick transformation revived the "dead" man. He sprang to his feet. A gun jutted from his hand. He darted between the cab and the stone wall of the transverse cut.

"This is a stickup! One yelp and I'll blast the three of you! You two in the back seat—get out quick with your mitts up!"

His voice was tough and snarling. But neither Carrie nor Aleck was deceived. Both recognized that pale, foxy face. Bert Fanning, the valet of the blackmailing Harvey Prentice!

THE knowledge did the two captives no good. A clutch for a gun would have been suicide. They stepped to the pavement with hands elevated.

"Let's have that bracelet!" Fanning growled at Carrie. "I know damn well you've got it!"

"Sorry," Carrie said in her softest tone. "You're wrong."

"Yeah?"

His left hand shot out and clawed at the neck of her dress. There was a ripping sound, but he didn't really tear the fabric very much. Aleck stopped that. He went into action with a desperate left hook.

His blow missed Fanning's jaw, but a lot of other things happened. Carrie screamed. The valet's gun roared explosively. There was a yell from the terrified taxi driver and the cab shot away in a cloud of blue exhaust smoke.

Carrie was knocked backward by the reeling bodies of the two fighting men. Aleck went down from a blow on the head from Fanning's gun butt. He caught the valet by the ankle and pulled him down with him. Again Fanning's gun roared. But this time Carrie's kick at his ribs deflected the bullet and sent him sprawling.

The valet was up like a flash. His face was suddenly green with fright. He had heard the shrill sound of a police whistle. A sedan was racing through the cut, drawn to the holdup scene by the roar of pistol fire. A cop hung precariously to the running board, a gun jutting from his white-gloved hand.

There was no need to tell the cop what to do. Fanning had mounted the curved wall of the cut, climbing with extraordinary speed. The stones that formed a supporting buttress for the traffic bridge overhead projected like enormous steps, one above the other.

By the time the cop had leaped from the running board of the sedan, Bert Fanning was bellying over the retaining wall to the greenery of Central Park. He grazed the cop's chin with a bullet. The policeman's gun replied. Then there was a streak of blue as the cop climbed the jutting stones of the wall. He vanished after the fugitive.

Aleck's jaw tightened.

"We've got to get out of here!" he whispered in Carrie's ear, "be-

'fore we're detained for questioning. Thank the Lord, we still have the bracelet!"

Carrie shook her head. Her face was very pale.

"The bracelet is gone. I—I hid it in that torn spot in the taxicab's upholstery. I was afraid Fanning might snatch it from me."

"What!" Aleck groaned aloud.

THE driver of the sedan in which the cop had arrived was watching them curiously. He thought they were still terrified from an attempted holdup. He smiled reassuringly at them with the importance of a man who had helped to rout an armed gunman.

But his smile glazed to a grimace of terror as Carrie flung open the sedan's front door and slid beside him. There was a businesslike little pistol in her slim hand.

"Keep quiet!" she ordered grimly. "Take care of him, Aleck!"

Aleck was already in the rear of the sedan. His lean arms caught the terrified car owner under the armpits and jerked him to the back seat. He forced his prisoner to the floor and dropped with him out of sight. Carrie tossed a lap robe over the two wrestling men. Then she slid behind the steering wheel and started the sedan.

The noise of the gunplay had already begun to draw more cars to the scene, but not one of them arrived in time to witness the swift hijack. Carrie drove quietly toward Fifth Avenue.

She had no hope of overtaking the fleeing taxicab behind whose ripped upholstery was hidden a bracelet of priceless value. That would have to come later—and not much later, either! She glanced tensely at her watch. Less than twenty minutes remained before Mrs. Dillman's husband arrived at Grand Central!

She parked at the curb of a deserted block east of Lexington Avenue. Aleck rose from the floor in the back. His tie was askew and there was a lump under his eye. The man he had yanked to the floor didn't move under his lap-robe covering.

"If you think it's a cinch to tie and gag a guy in a spot like that," he grinned shakily, "try it some time!"

There was no answering smile on Carrie's pretty face. Her red lips compressed tightly for an instant.

"We've got," she said, "a little over fifteen minutes to get hold of that missing bracelet—and to delay that gem expert who's arriving at Grand Central with Mrs. Dillman's husband. I'll take care of the latter assignment. You've got to *find that bracelet!*"

"How?" Aleck asked dully.

There was hopelessness in his voice. But Carrie's words roused him to renewed alertness.

"The cab is a Checker. I caught a glimpse of the license number as the frightened chauffeur scrammed. I didn't get a clear view, but I think I'm right about all the numbers except the last two. The ones I saw are 08274. And I *always* look at the hack license card of every taxi I enter. It's a good habit to cultivate, Aleck. The chauffeur's name is Salvatore Monturo."

THEY had both stepped from the parked sedan. Carrie closed the doors and made sure they were locked. She took the keys with her. The chance of anyone noticing a prisoner huddled beneath the lap robe in the back within the next half hour was remote. After that, it wouldn't matter, Carrie thought grimly.

"Find a phone booth and call up

the Checker office," she told Aleck crisply. "Give 'em the dope on the hacker's name and the license number. Tell 'em you're a city dick and that this Monturo is suspected of being implicated in a holdup. Ask for the location of Montura's hack stand. You'll find the Versailles Bracelet jammed deep inside that torn hole in the upholstery. And for gosh sake—grab it in a hurry! We haven't a second to waste!"

"Where shall I meet you?"

"Outside the Dillman mansion. Beat it—and good luck!"

Aleck's lips twisted ruefully.

"We're going to need about four barrels of luck," he growled.

Carrie didn't waste time replying. She hurried swiftly to the corner. She began to walk down Lexington Avenue, her eyes alert for an empty taxi. Three nerve-racking minutes elapsed before she found one.

But there was no excitement in her voice as she told the driver where to take her. She explained quietly that her sister was arriving from Chicago and that she had to reach Grand Central in time to meet her. She let a five-dollar bill emphasize her request for speed.

The hands of the Grand Central clock were barely a minute from the time of the Chicago train's arrival when Carrie hurried into the terminal. She spent twenty precious seconds at the incoming train blackboard. The Chicago Limited was coming in on Track 9.

By the time Carrie Cashin reached the train gate passengers were already beginning to pour from the opened gateway.

Mrs. Dillman's husband was among the last. Carrie recognized him from the accurate description furnished her by his wife.

Alongside him trotted Caleb Markham. He looked more like a fussy little dentist than a gem expert who had traveled a thousand miles for the pleasure of feasting his eyes on the famous Versailles Bracelet. He wore a fussy brown Vandyke beard and his eyes were bright, like a bird's. Both men were carrying suitcases.

Carrie hadn't yet had time to formulate a definite scheme to delay them. She was depending on the events of the next few seconds to give her the break her quick brain was watching for. She knew that Aleck would need adequate time to find Monturo's cab, and grab the bracelet from the hole in the torn upholstery of the back seat.

CALEB MARKHAM set down his suitcase suddenly. He was a little man and the bag was heavy. He looked about for a porter, but all those in sight were already engaged.

"Wait here," he told Dillman. "We've got a long walk to the street. I'll find a porter."

Dillman nodded and walked over to a newsstand to buy a paper. Markham trotted away on his short legs, his bright eyes peering about for a redcap.

Carrie Cashin's heart leaped with quick excitement as she followed him through an arched doorway and down a narrow marble corridor. She had figured out her plan! It was a risky one—but childishly simple.

She opened her handbag and also the purse inside the bag as she lessened the distance behind her unsuspecting victim.

The crowd of pedestrians streaming through the corridor were all typical New Yorkers; each was *minding his own business, looking* neither to left nor right. None of them saw Carrie slyly hurl her handbag to the floor.

Her shrill scream was what aroused them. They turned, open-mouthed with surprise, to see a pretty girl's money and belongings scattered on the floor from a dropped handbag. The girl was wrestling desperately with a little man in a brown Vandyke beard who was fighting angrily to escape her grip.

"Help!" Carrie screamed. "Thief! He tried to snatch my purse! Don't let him get away!"

Men sprang forward. Hands clutched at the squirming Markham and held him fast. He looked astounded and enraged. He fought viciously to escape from his deluded captors. His voice was a shrill bleat.

"Let me go! This girl is insane! I never touched her."

"He's lying!" Carrie sobbed. Her helplessness emphasized her wistful beauty. "He grabbed the purse right out of my hand! I—I want to make a charge against him. Someone please pick up my money! Hold him till I get a cop!"

Markham was shoved grimly backward by his indignant captors.

A voice cried sharply: "Shove him inside the detention room. If he's innocent, let him explain it to a cop. He looks to me like a foxy little crook."

CARRIE began to retreat away through the gathering crowd. There was a lot of excitement and shouting. Most of the noise came from a little Italian in a dark work shirt and corduroy pants. He was a public bootblack, and his shoe-shine chair was across the corridor, almost directly opposite the spot where Carrie had framed her "holdup." He was yelling shrilly at the top of his lungs, but his words were a string of incomprehensible Italian. No one paid any attention to him.

Before Carrie could edge deftly away from the commotion, two unfortunate things happened. Dillman came rushing to Markham's aid with a bellow of rage. And the little shoe-shine man who was jabbering in rapid Italian caught fiercely at the arm of a fellow bootblack.

"This is damned nonsense!" Dillman roared. "That girl is a blasted liar! The man you're annoying is Caleb Markham, one of the foremost gem collectors in the country. Let go of him, you fools! I'll vouch for his honesty. I'm Thomas Dillman!"

The mention of his name and that of Markham brought an uneasy silence to the crowd. Dillman's photograph had been in the newspapers often enough for people to recognize him as the well-known investment banker. And in the lull of noise, the voice of the excited bootblack's companion was clearly heard.

"Deesa girl—she's beega crook! Tony see what she do—but he no can talk only Italian. Deesa girl, *she throw her own handbag on the floor!* Herself! *Ooof*—like that!"

The interpreter made a dramatic downward gesture to illustrate his meaning.

"Then she grabba deesa poor leetle guy with the beard—and she holler like hell. But it's a beega fake! Tony see what she do—— She—where the hell she run?"

Faces whirled. Eyes stared stupidly along the corridor. Carrie was already in flight. The minute the bootblack's interpreter had begun to talk English, Carrie knew her desperate scheme to detain Markham had failed. Her slim silken legs fled through the corridor archway. She plunged pell-mell through the crowd that thronged the high-ceilinged waiting room.

The sight of a cop hurrying toward the scene of the distant commotion restored her frightened wits. She slowed her flight to a careless walk. But the moment the cop passed her, she raced through a door on the opposite side of the concourse. Her goal was the paved platform on the Vanderbilt Avenue side, where a line of taxicabs waited for departing travelers.

In a jiffy, Carrie was inside the foremost cab.

"Uptown—quick! I'm in an awful hurry! My sister's dying. I've come all the way from Chicago to reach her before she dies!"

CHAPTER IV.

CROOK CLEAN-UP.

CARRIE didn't give the driver an address until the cab was swiftly under way. She didn't want the knot of lounging hackmen to overhear her. Her own driver was a stupid-looking individual in a soiled leather jacket. He grunted without interest when she murmured the address of the Dillman home.

Leaning back, she caught her breath. She knew she was still doomed to race against time. Dillman and Caleb Markham were undoubtedly already leaving Grand Central. It wouldn't take long for them to explain to the cop and grab a cab. Once more, this dangerous bracelet adventure had narrowed down to a matter of minutes—perhaps seconds.

Success or failure had passed from the control of Carrie herself. It was up to Aleck now! If he had located the missing taxicab and found the bracelet, there was still a slim opportunity to return Mrs. Dillman's historic jewels to her wall safe in the library of the Dillman home before her husband arrived with Caleb Markham.

Carrie had never lost a case yet. Aleck *had* to be in front of the Dillman home, waiting triumphantly.

But he wasn't!

The dark residential street was quiet. Carrie stood at the curb, trembling with dismay after her cab departed. She felt utterly spent and weary, on the verge of angry tears.

The next instant, she stiffened. She uttered a quick, eager cry. Aleck was rising out of darkness to meet her. He had been hidden in a near-by areaway of the row of sleek brownstone mansions that lined the block. A noiseless rush of feet and he was alongside Carrie.

"Did you find it?" Carrie rasped. She couldn't recognize her own voice. It was like the squeak of a file.

"How's this look?" He snapped open the lid of the brown leather case.

One glance at the flashing beauty of the diamond bracelet and Carrie was dragging Aleck up the Dillman steps. Over her shoulder she had seen the lights of a taxicab rounding the corner from the avenue. Her finger shoved hard on the doorbell. She kept the bell ringing without a pause.

SUDDENLY, the door swung wide. Mrs. Dillman herself was framed in the opening. She uttered a cry of delight at sight of Carrie Cashin. Then her face paled. A taxicab was drawing up at the curb with a squeal of brakes.

Carrie knew what that meant. She shoved Aleck inward and slammed the door.

"Did you recover the bracelet?" Mrs. Dillman cried.

"Yes. Open the wall safe in the library! Quick!"

The three darted along the hall. Mrs. Dillman threw open a door. She rushed toward the library wall and began twirling the dial of a tiny built-in safe. But she was too late! There was a rattle in the lock of the front door. Feet hurried down the hall. Dillman entered the library, followed by the tense figure of Caleb Markham.

Carrie still had the Versailles Bracelet. Aleck looked at her with grim despair. His square shoulders shrugged expressively.

For a moment, there was no sound but Dillman's quick breathing. His wife's face was ghastly. But she was a thoroughbred even in defeat. She stood erect, aware that her husband was icy with suspicious rage. He kept glaring alternately from Carrie to her, trying to recover his breath.

Her hands were trembling. She slid them into the slit pockets of the tailored velvet hostess gown she was wearing. Dillman sprang forward and lifted her cold hands into view.

"Why are you trembling so? Is it because you have a guilty conscience, my dear?"

His voice was bitterly accusing. Mrs. Dillman faced him with an effort.

"You're insulting my—my guests."

"Guests? That girl is a crook! She tried to pull a frame-up on Markham at Grand Central; damned near had him arrested! I didn't understand then, but I do now! She was trying to delay us from getting home. Why? I want to see that diamond bracelet! Right now!"

"Very well."

She turned despairingly toward the safe, but her husband forestalled her. Aleck's fists were clenched, but there was nothing he could do. Carrie's expression offered no hint of her thoughts.

Dillman opened the wall safe. He looked astounded when he saw a brown leather box inside. The anger drained from his eyes. He opend the box and took out the diamond bracelet with an embarrassed gesture.

"I'm sorry," he said thickly. "I—I thought it was missing. "I—I——"

"May I see the bracelet?" Caleb Markham said.

He took it quietly. There was a faint smile on his thin lips as he studied it for a long moment. He was still smiling when he looked up.

"This is not the Versailles Bracelet," he said. "It's bogus. A good imitation—but a fake just the same."

MRS. DILLMAN swayed, and Carrie sprang to support her. Dillman uttered an oath. He was a man of violent temper. For an instant, Carrie thought that he was about to strike his wife with his clenched fist.

"So I was right, damn you! My own wife—in league with thieves and——"

Carrie interrupted his tirade. Her voice was as smooth as glass, and as hard.

"Don't you think it would be more sensible to find out the truth before you behave like an ass, Mr. Dillman? Mrs. Dillman, will you please take the *real* Versailles Bracelet out of the pocket of your hostess gown, where you placed it when your husband rushed in here like a maniac?"

The woman's body quivered. She looked utterly astounded. But her hand dipped obediently in the pocket of her gown—and came out with a flat, brown leather box. Carrie took it from her trembling grasp and opened it to expose the glitter of diamonds. She handed the bracelet to Caleb Markham.

"Examine it, please."

He did so, his eyes puzzled.

"It's the Versailles Bracelet," he admitted slowly. He seemed disappointed, uncertain what to say. "What does all this mean?"

"It means," Carrie told him evenly, "that you're a filthy little scoundrel!"

"What!" Markham recoiled from the cold flame in Carrie's eyes.

"Your name is not Caleb Markham. You're not even a jewel expert. You're a sly crook in league with a blackmailer named Harvey Prentice."

She advanced toward the little man. He backed away, his bright eyes pinched with worry.

"You must be insane!"

Carrie smiled grimly.

"I watched your eyes when you examined those two bracelets. I could see that you didn't know a thing about their actual value. You called the one in the safe an imitation—because that's what you *expected it to be.* When I produced the other, you *had* to say it was real to justify your reputation as an expert. In other words, you're a crook impersonating the real Caleb Markham, whom you probably slugged and made a prisoner in Chicago, before you approached Mr. Dillman and asked him to let you see the Versailles Bracelet."

"Just how are you going to prove that?" he sneered.

"By giving you a clean shave," Carrie replied evenly.

HER hand reached suddenly outward. She caught the fuzzy Vandyke beard and jerked. There was a howl of pain from the man. The beard tore partially away in Carrie's grip, exposing the pallid, clean-shaven face of a man whose bright eyes were suddenly filmed with the lust to kill.

His hand flicked downward toward his hip. A gun gleamed. It jerked level, toward Carrie's breast.

The bullet didn't reach its target. Aleck's whizzing fist cracked against the crook's jaw. It sent Markham crashing backward. The slug from his gun slanted into the ceiling of the library. Plaster sifted downward like snow on Carrie's chestnut hair.

Markham lay inert on the rug. Joe Louis couldn't have knocked a man any colder.

Dillman said in a small, bitter whisper: "I presume you're detectives. You mentioned blackmail. Is —is my wife——"

"Don't tell him," his wife gasped.

But Carrie shook her head. She patted the frightened woman's arm with gentle reassurance.

"It's time to tell the truth. Perhaps the simple truth will do your pig-headed husband some good. I think he needs it."

Carrie faced Dillman coldly. She told him exactly what had happened between Mrs. Dillman and the shrewd Harvey Prentice; explained how a frightened mother had pledged the Versailles Bracelet to save her own son from disaster.

"*Your* son, too," Carrie told Dillman tonelessly. "A hot-tempered, impulsive, headstrung boy—exactly like you. Maybe that's why you're so hard on him! The only thing your wife is guilty of is mother love. You don't really deserve her!"

Dillman said thickly: "If I was hard with my son, it was because I was so worried——"

His eyes stared pleadingly at his lovely wife. He stumbled blindly toward her.

"Oh, my dear, my dear!"

His arms caught her in a straining embrace.

CARRIE'S smile was blurred as she whispered to Aleck.

"Get on the phone. Tell the police to pick up an unconscious crook at the Dillman home. Tell them they'll find another crook named Harvey Prentice resting in his apartment with a bullet hole through his wrist. His valet, Bert Fanning, is probably there, too. Mrs. Dillman will prosecute them for attempted blackmail. Her husband will coöperate."

Aleck nodded. He darted to the phone and his voice raced eagerly. When he finished, Carrie touched his arm.

"Let's get down to police headquarters. I want to be there to see Prentice's face when they lug him in!"

Dillman and his wife were still locked in each other's arms. Carrie and Aleck let themselves quietly out. They waited near the corner until they heard the siren of a polic squad car and saw it halt in front of the Dillman home.

"How did you know that little mug in the Vandyke was a crook?" Aleck asked his pretty employer.

Carrie laughed.

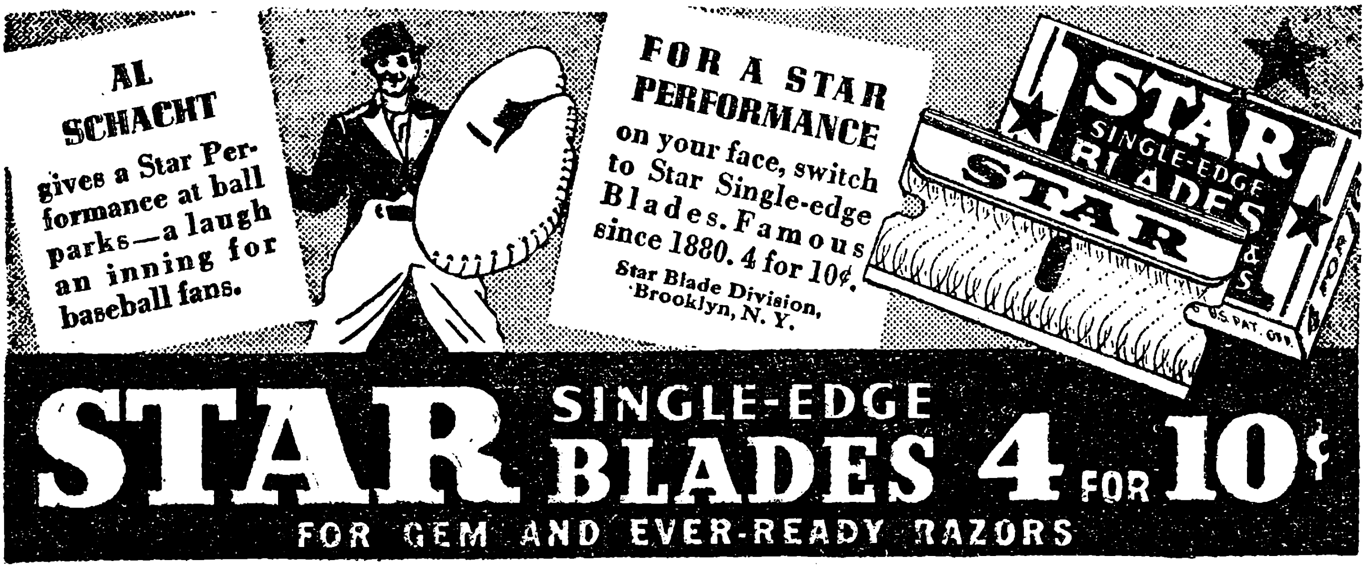
"I didn't—until I had the fight with him at Grand Central! He kept throwing up his arm to protect his face. The minute I got a close look at the beard, I knew it was phony. He was able to fool Dillman, but I've monkeyed with disguises too long to be kidded. I could almost tell you where he bought that particular type of gum adhesive!"

"You're a tough gal to monkey with," Aleck said.

"You think so?" Carrie queried.

Aleck flushed at the quiet smile she gave him. He could see comradeship and affection in that steady gaze. He started to say something and choked it off. If he tried to explain half the things that Carrie Cashin meant to him, he might spoil everything.

"Come on, boss," he said gruffly. "Let's get down to police headquarters!"



AL SCHACHT gives a Star Performance at ball parks—a laugh an inning for baseball fans.

FOR A STAR PERFORMANCE on your face, switch to Star Single-edge Blades. Famous since 1880. 4 for 10¢.

Star Blade Division, Brooklyn, N. Y.

STAR SINGLE-EDGE BLADES 4 FOR 10¢

FOR GEM AND EVER-READY RAZORS

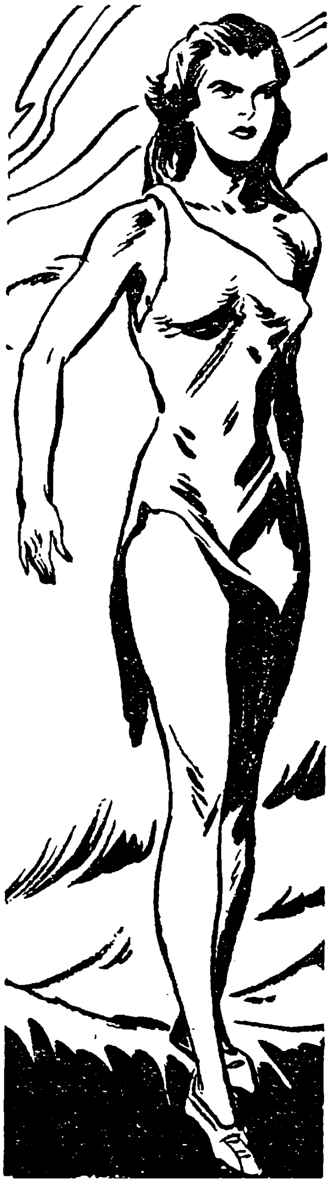
THE SILVER VENUS

A "Norgil" novelette

By Maxwell Grant

Author of The Shadow novels

Norgil, magician, makes a thing of beauty disappear—only to bring something grim and terrible in its place!



CHAPTER I.

THE UNKNOWN VOICE.

IT was worth twelve thousand dollars, it weighed more than half a ton and it was the most graceful creation that Norgil had ever viewed.

Such was the Silver Venus, the life-size statue that stood in the great vault of the Dorchester Museum.

In its standing pose, with outstretched arms, the statue was lifelike. Its proportions were perfect, so that the figure seemed to poise without the aid of the pedestal that balanced it. The face, gazing upward, had an expression that suited a statue of a goddess.

Perhaps a real Venus would have been more soulful; but in metal, the features that Norgil saw were better chosen. They were Roman; sharp, cold despite their beauty. Deep-set eyes, stern nose, straight-lined lips and rounded chin might lack the femininity suited to a human, but for a silver goddess, they produced the effect of austere beauty.

Suaveness had gone from Norgil's own face as he eyed the statue. He appreciated rare art when he saw it, and he was deep in admiration. That annoyed the big man who stood beside him. The big man was Claude Frenmore, manager of the Dorchester Exposition.

"What about it, Norgil?" demanded Frenmore in a heavy, businesslike tone. "You've seen the statue. Can you do a stunt with it at the auditorium show?"

"A large order," replied Norgil. "I could vanish the statue, but none of my cabinets are strong enough to sustain that weight."

"Build a new one," suggested Frenmore. "You have a few days left. We'll pay the expenses. A vanishing Venus would be a sensation, Norgil."

The magician rubbed his chin. The thing challenged him, and that set his wits to work. Struck with a sudden idea, Norgil turned to Frenmore, then pursed his lips. Frenmore had begun an argument with a third member of the group, and Norgil preferred to listen.

The third man was Pierre Judlin, the sculptor who had created the Silver Venus. Stoop-shouldered and withery, Judlin made a ludicrous but plaintive spectacle as he vehemently shook his shocky, white-haired head.

"I cannot permit it!" he piped. "The Venus is my masterpiece. It shall be exhibited only in this museum, not on the stage."

"Ridiculous!" snapped Frenmore. "Norgil is an artist, a craftsman like yourself, Judlin. You owe him some courtesy. Besides, the publicity from this performance may have some bearing on the price that the museum pays for the statue. That is still unsettled, Judlin."

An eager look came into the sculptor's eyes. Norgil knew why. Judlin, today, was worth exactly twelve thousand dollars, represented by the value of the silver in his statue. He needed that money and whatever additional profit the sale might bring him.

"Funds are to be raised by public subscription," reminded Frenmore. "If you expect people to coöperate, you must interest them in the statue. Once they have seen it, they will enthuse. Norgil is bringing you an opportunity to reach the public."

Frenmore might have said more, but he caught a gesture from Norgil. With a nod, the big man decided that he would let the two "artists" talk it over. He went up to the curator's office, leaving Norgil at the vault with Judlin.

Twenty minutes later, Norgil joined Frenmore. From the window they saw Judlin striding from the museum, pocketing the key to the vault over which he had custody, since it contained only his statue. The sculptor was muttering to himself, but his face looked pleased.

"You fixed it?" queried Frenmore.

"I did," replied Norgil. "I let him argue it out."

"What did you do then? Hypnotize him?"

"No. I found out his real worry. He was afraid that the statue might be injured in shipment. I had a preventative for that. We're going to pack it in the mold in which it was cast. That will save the statue from injury."

"From now on," complimented Frenmore, "I'll leave Judlin to you, Norgil. He's a queer duck, full of temperament, but you seem to know how to handle him."

DURING the next few days, Norgil further demonstrated his influence over Judlin. Those were busy days, for Norgil's show had arrived in town and was being overhauled for the big performance at the huge municipal auditorium. Speculation was great regarding Norgil's promise to vanish the half-ton Silver Venus.

The magician had arranged a special room as his private workshop, and he spent many hours there, with Fritz, his chief assistant. Only one other person was allowed to visit there. The privileged man was Pierre Judlin. In his plans concerning the Silver Venus, Norgil had taken the sculptor into complete confidence.

No one else, not even Claude Frenmore, knew the nature of the equipment that was shipped into Norgil's workshop. Crates that came by truck were taken directly to the isolated room and opened privately by Norgil and Fritz.

Meanwhile, Judlin had shipped the mold to the museum vault. Frenmore was told that the Silver Venus would be packed and ready on the final day, when it was to be conveyed by armored truck to the municipal auditorium.

That final day had arrived. Early afternoon found Norgil in the hotel lobby, scanning newspaper headlines that predicted the Vanishing Venus would be the most sensational mystery of the century. Norgil agreed with his own publicity. If the stunt came off as he planned it, the residents of Dorchester would have something to wonder about for a long while to come.

Tonight's show, too, could prove the one redeeming feature in the Dorchester Exposition, which had been a disappointment. Scarcely more than an oversize carnival, the Exposition had been dominated by gamblers and flimflam operators, much to the dismay of the local promoters.

Claude Frenmore, who was passing through the lobby, expressed those sentiments confidentially to Norgil.

"We're hoping to wind up with something worth-while," said the big man, "so people will remember the Exposition as a success. We've sold out all the tickets—six thousand of them. But what about Judlin?" Frenmore looked anxious. "He hasn't changed his mind about letting you vanish the Venus?"

"On the contrary," returned Norgil, "Judlin has been highly cooperative. He's a secretive chap, the very sort who could be trusted to aid my preparations."

Frenmore nodded as he rose.

"That sizes it, Norgil," he agreed. "Judlin goes through with whatever he says he will. But, lately, something has been preying on his mind. I wish I knew what it was."

Frenmore left, letting Norgil think over what he had said. The big man was right; something was bothering Judlin. Norgil had noticed it, but had asked no questions. He didn't speculate long on Judlin's troubles. They were the sculptor's own business.

NORGIL turned his thoughts to calculating how much his share would be on six thousand tickets ranging in price from two dollars down to sixty cents, on a basis of forty per cent. He was still dealing in mathematics when a bellboy approached to tell him he was wanted on the telephone.

Entering a telephone booth, the magician took the call. A woman's voice came across the wire, a tone that was strangely metallic, different from any feminine voice that Norgil had ever heard. Once sure that she was speaking to Norgil, the caller became brisk.

"Your show's a sellout," said the unknown voice. "With a few thousand dollars coming your way, you can spare five hundred bucks for what I have to tell you."

"That may make sense," returned Norgil, "after I've heard what it is."

The hard voice gave a laugh that carried a bitter ring. Then, cold as before, it added:

"I'll talk when I meet you."

"Quite satisfactory," purred Norgil. "I'll be at the auditorium in half an hour."

"I prefer to meet you elsewhere." The voice was more metallic as it spoke the decision. "Outside the palmistry booth at the Exposition grounds. In half an hour."

Norgil sensed that the call was about to end. He parried, to keep the woman on the line:

"How will I know who you are?"

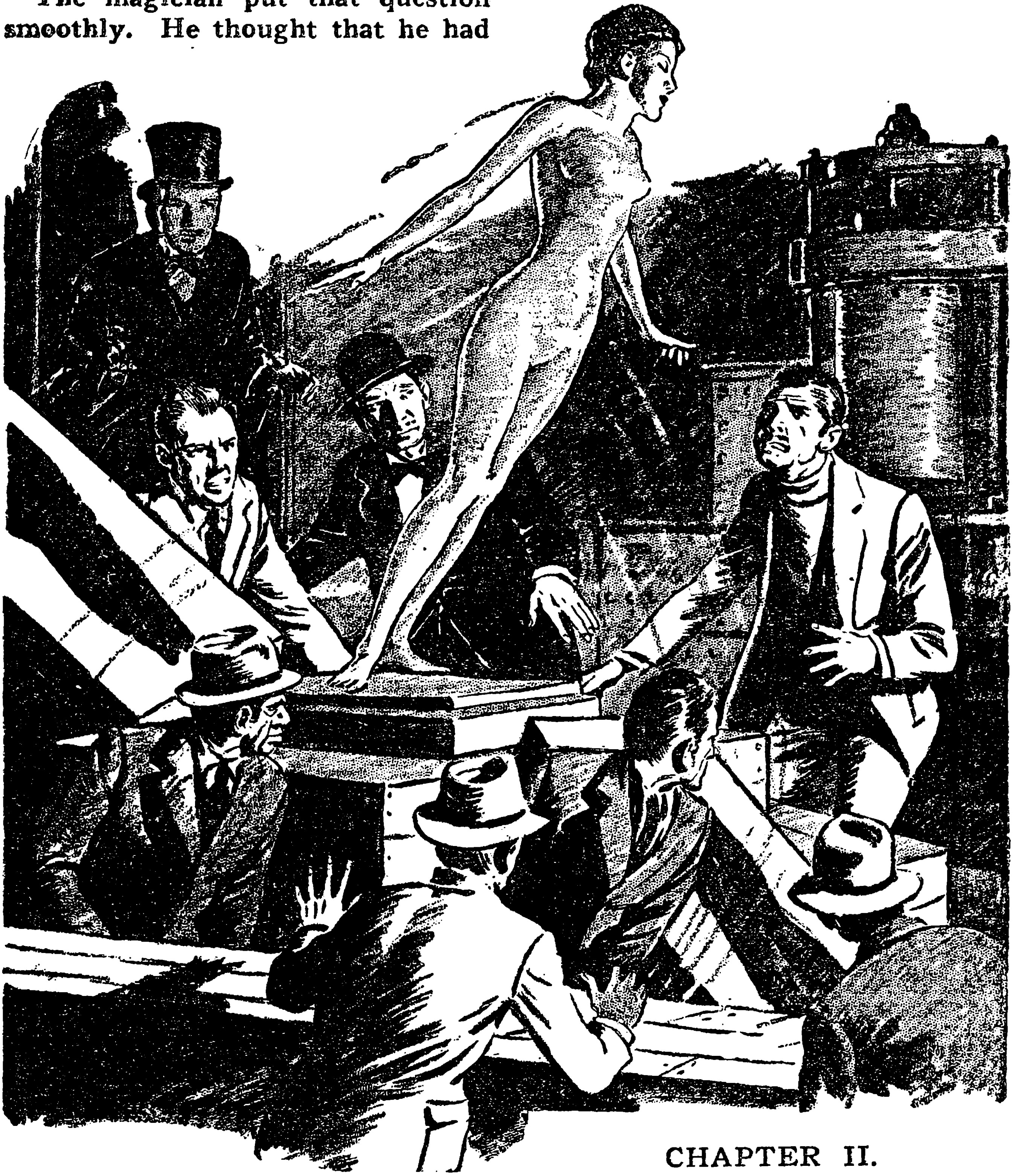
"You will recognize me," the voice assured him, "when you see me."

"And your name?"

The magician put that question smoothly. He thought that he had created confidence, the sort that would bring a tangible answer. It did, but not the reply that Norgil expected. What he heard actually amazed him.

Like the jangle of a discordant bell, suited to the very words the woman uttered, the unknown voice announced:

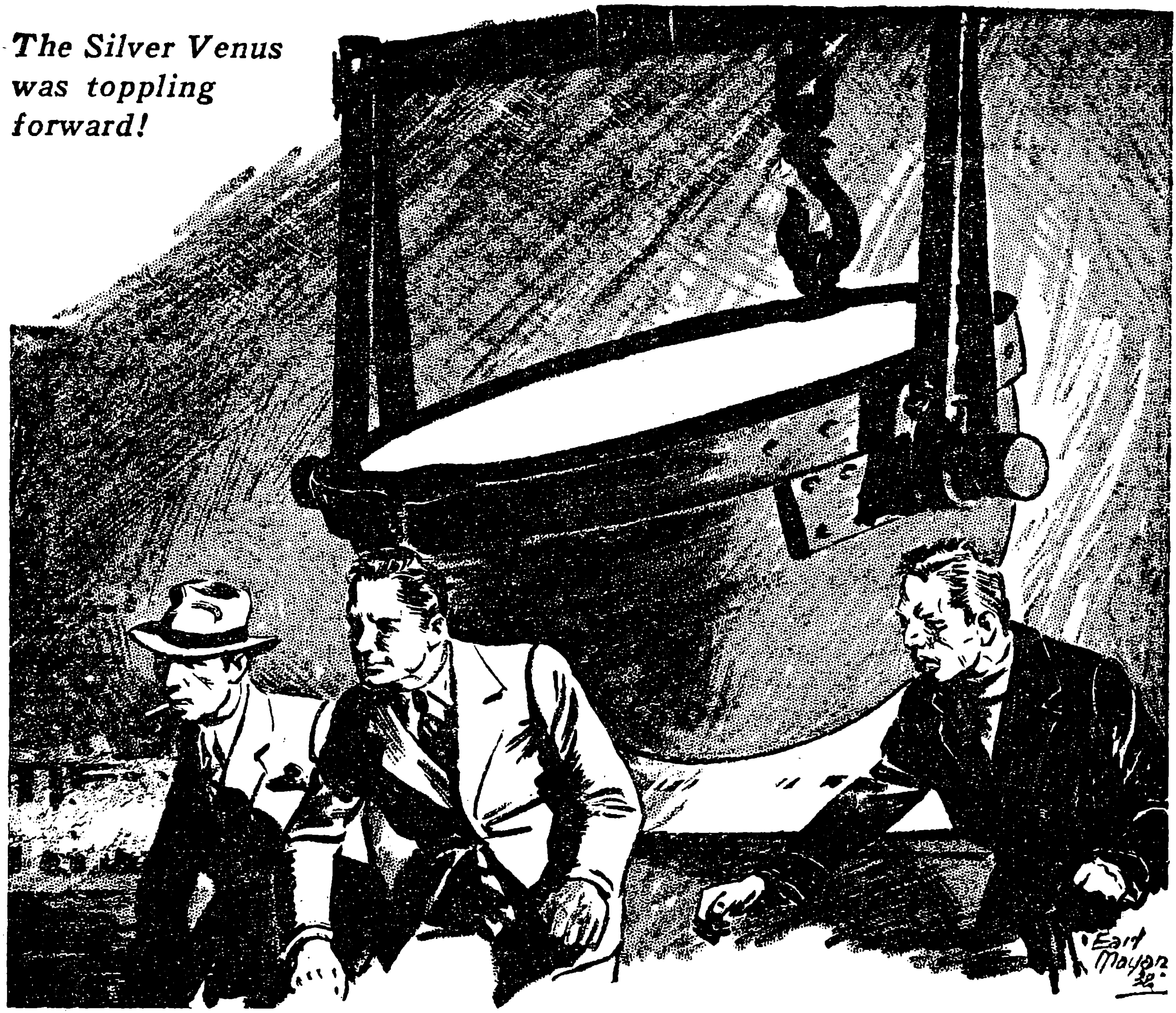
"I am the Silver Venus!"



CHAPTER II.

THE TWO-WAY RIDE.

NORGIL found himself juggling a dead telephone receiver. The person at the other end had hung up, leaving the magician somewhat baffled. Despite the curious clangor of the voice, Norgil didn't believe



The Silver Venus was toppling forward!

that he had chatted with the Silver Venus in the museum vault. Norgil didn't meet up with mysteries like that, except when he produced them.

Was Pierre Judlin in back of it?

Norgil rejected that possibility. Despite Judlin's eccentricities, he knew the sculptor well enough to disassociate him from amateur theatricals. Claude Frenmore, too, could be eliminated. He was too busy with Exposition affairs to indulge in any pointless practical jokes.

That call was the sole idea of the person who had made it; and her purpose was business. Memory of the hard voice kept drumming through Norgil's brain. His only solution to the matter would be to keep the appointment.

It took Norgil fifteen minutes to reach the Exposition grounds, where he used one of the many passes that Frenmore had given him. Members of Norgil's company had reported that the Exposition was terrible, and on this first visit, Norgil found that they were right.

The place was nothing more than an old amusement park that had been amplified with carnival concessions. A few exhibition buildings stood at the far end of the ground, and to reach them, visitors had to run a gantlet of booths managed by grifters.

Ahead of the appointed time, Norgil decided to make the rounds and wander back. He passed the Old Mill, where battered boats clumped off through bumpy waterways, and came to the Magic Waltz, where cylindrical cars that looked like incinerators offered a ten-cent ride through the darkness of a barnlike building.

"Only a dime!" blatted the gold-toothed barker. Then, spying Norgil, the fellow added, grinning: "Free to you. How about taking a trip, Mr. Norgil?"

Before Norgil could decline, his mind was made up for him. Two of the huskies that he had previously noticed sidled up to him and poked gun muzzles through the cloth of their coat pockets. Those muzzles nudged Norgil's ribs, as one man confided:

"Take the ride, guy, if you know what's good for you!"

NORGIL stepped aboard a car, one of the gunners staying with him. The other took the next car, and the trip began. They jounced around inside the darkness until Norgil had inched away from the only muzzle that still covered him. Then the magician came to action.

Raining punches on the man beside him, he left the fellow slumping in the basket car. The attack was so fast that the crook didn't manage a single shot. Vaulting the side of the car, Norgil sprang aboard the next one just as its occupant flicked a flashlight toward him. The flash went to the bottom of the car with its owner, for Norgil's fists were swifter than his opponent's delayed aim. But that didn't end the fight.

One hooking fist found Norgil's jaw. They carried him away after that haymaker. When he woke up, Norgil found himself in a cellar room with stone walls. He was tied by heavy ropes and propped in a damp corner. From the floor above came a rumble that signified he was underneath the Magic Waltz.

Three captors began a husky-voiced quiz. They wanted to know "how much the dame had spilled." Norgil looked blank, which wasn't difficult the way his jaw felt.

"Get talkin'," ordered a thug. "You know the moll we mean. Her name's Nanette——"

Norgil talked.

His smooth comments convinced the listeners that they had followed a wrong steer. They held a confab, and finally decided that "the moll musta lammed" as she had been told to do. But that didn't end Norgil's predicament.

"You ain't givin' no show," one of the crooks told him. "You're stayin' here for the night. If you don't try nothin', we'll spill a tip-off where you are, so you'll be out by mornin'. Only get this through your conk: We ain't in the snatch racket. Savvy?"

Norgil "savvied." He seemed hopeful that his good behavior would lead to an earlier release. The crooks went out through the single doorway of a heavy-built partition, shoved a bolt shut behind them.

"No show tonight?" voiced Norgil, half aloud. "That depends on how the matinée goes. Ready—curtain!"

He rolled across the stone floor, wriggling in the ropes that bound him. It was a show, all right, and the crooks were missing something worth watching. Contorting his limbs. Norgil fought for slack. By drawing ropes more tightly about his left arm, he gained some leeway with his right.

He was forcing the ropes downward, until one troublesome coil balked at his hips. Rolling to the wall, Norgil hooked the coil against a projecting chunk of stone. Sliding forward and backward in long, tireless routine, he finally brought *the rope below his right hip.* Rolling over, he lay face-upward and worked on the left side.

Tightening on the left, he brought his right hand free. From then on it was merely a matter of short-cuts to the climax, which came when Norgil tossed the coils of rope into the corner. That done, his problem was to get out of his cell.

THE partition was a bad gamble, for Norgil suspected that there were watchers outside. The ceiling was too high, and Norgil couldn't wait for one of the Magic Waltz cars to drop through, although the heavy rumbles indicated that the creaky floor was none too safe. That thought, however, gave Norgil an idea.

He probed along the stone wall, feeling for the dampest spot. There, he placed his ear close to the wall; he could hear the splashy surge of flowing water. Digging with his fingernails he found a loose stone and worked it from the wall. Seepy gravel lay beyond. Norgil shoveled it out by fistfuls.

The task was easier, the farther he went. He struck a flow of water that gushed inward, bringing spurts from other crevices. Stones that had been tight were loosening under pressure. Norgil didn't have to scoop more gravel. It came surging with the water that arrived when he tore away the stones.

The water had reached his knees. Some of it was trickling out beneath the tight-fitting door of the opposite partition, but that wouldn't matter. It would help, considering the way the flood was on the increase. By the time the water was to his waist, Norgil had the complete channel that he needed.

The space was four feet wide, and three high. The stream was coming like a cataract into the pond that Norgil had created, but there was space above the flow. All the space that Norgil needed. He was ready to use it when he heard the bolt slide back from the partition door.

That barrier opened outward, to the discomfort of the crooks who yanked it. When they pulled the door, the flood met them. Norgil saw flashlights flinging wide as they went scuttling off through the cellar. He didn't wait for their bellowing thugs to organize. Grabbing the sides of the wall fissure, Norgil squeezed through, heading upstream.

His hands gripping wood, Norgil drew himself to a clumsy platform. Something came thumping through the darkness; he waited until it was almost past, then dropped aboard. Crouched low, he waited until the boat emerged into a sudden brilliance.

It was dusk. The Exposition grounds were sparkling with lights. Norgil had finished another free ride that he had picked up at the halfway mark. He was coming out of the Old Mill, in the stern seat of a gondola.

Passengers up front were shouting that the mill stream was pouring from its channel. Attendants promptly cut off the flow, for this was the last boat. From his vantage point, Norgil could see men flocking from the Magic Waltz. They were on the run for a parking lot, the barker among them.

They knew that Norgil was on the loose, but they didn't know where he was. Sliding from the gondola, Norgil vaulted the exit rail and took to the darkness in an opposite direction.

Crooks had business elsewhere. So did Norgil. There was still time to put on the show at the auditorium.

CHAPTER III.

THE VANISHING VENUS.

THERE was an alleyway that led to the stage door of the auditorium, and police were blocking it when Norgil arrived. The magician's face, thrust from a cab window, was sufficient passport to admit him through the cordon.

An armored truck was standing deep in the alley. It had come from the museum, and that was the reason why the police had formed lines to hold back the curious. Spectators, however, gained no sight of the Silver Venus. All they saw was the massive, crated mold which Norgil had stated would be used for the statue's shipment.

Fritz was superintending the unloading of the bulky crate. Norgil took over that duty and the heavy object was slid on to roller trucks, then guided across stage to the workshop at the rear. There, Fritz first noticed Norgil's bedraggled condition, and anxiously questioned the reason.

Norgil told him all that had happened, ordered complete silence. Then:

"Anybody been around here?" questioned the magician. "See any sign of a girl that might have been this Nanette?"

Fritz shook his head. Only Judlin had been at the auditorium when Fritz arrived some two hours before. Fritz had stayed on the premises ever since. Judlin had left to go to the museum, to meet the armored truck.

"Where's Judlin now?" asked Norgil anxiously. "He didn't come back with the truck."

"I asked him to pick up some aluminum paint," explained Fritz. "The quick-drying stuff that I used to decorate the cabinets. I ran short of it this afternoon."

Norgil suggested that they get busy. The room where they stood was half filled by a great chest that looked like an oversize refrigerator. Since it was to be the temporary residence of the Venus, they opened the door and maneuvered the uncrated mold inside. There, with portable derrick and winch, they worked the mold to an upright position.

SOMEONE knocked at the door of the workshop. Norgil stepped past an array of metal boxes that partly blocked an entrance to a closet. Opening the door to the stage, he peered through the crack. The man who had knocked was Pierre Judlin. Norgil admitted him.

"Glad to see you," he told the sculptor. "I've got plenty to do before show time, so suppose you help Fritz with the Venus."

Judlin agreed. He laid aside the can of aluminum paint and entered the big chest, where Fritz was still working the windlass. Together, they settled the mold in standing position upon a heavy steel platform.

"Forget the decorations," Norgil told Fritz. "You won't have time to do any painting. Be careful when you bring in the glass panels, and give the steam pipes a final test."

In his dressing room, Norgil mentally reviewed the afternoon's adventure. He had a good theory regarding Nanette, the girl with the metallic voice. She was connected with the mob that had taken over many of the concessions at the Dorchester Exposition, but she couldn't have mentioned that over the telephone. By calling herself the "Silver Venus," she had chosen a good way to arouse Norgil's interest.

When first trapped, Norgil had supposed that the girl had decoyed him into trouble; but he had later changed his opinion regarding the mysterious Nanette. He knew what she was: a double-crosser, who had been willing to sell out the mob. But they had suspected it. Whether she had learned what happened to Norgil or merely become scared, it was probable that she had decided her own safety was worth more than five hundred dollars, and had cleared town.

At least Norgil's adventure had told him what crooks intended. They were out to seize the Silver Venus. Meeting up with Norgil, they had impulsively decided to hold him prisoner. His escape was a bad crimp for their plans. Unless they had some remarkably clever scheme for stealing the Silver Venus, they couldn't risk attempting the theft the way matters stood at present.

TIME passed rapidly back stage. Just before the curtain call Norgil managed a look into the workshop. Everything was well in there. Matters were all right, too, at the stage door. Claude Frenmore had arranged for half a dozen policemen to be on constant duty while the Silver Venus was at the auditorium.

Then the show was on. Norgil faced a packed house that enthusiastically greeted his appearance. From that moment onward, Norgil had them sitting on the edges of their chairs. The two acts of his ninety-minute performance were masterful and brilliant.

Skillful a sleight of hand, Norgil intrigued his audience with deft manipulations, then left people mystified by his larger tricks and illusions. Fish bowls, rabbits appeared from everywhere. Girl assistants flitted in and out of cabinets, obligingly allowed themselves to be sawed in half, and floated in the air at Norgil's command.

It was a stupendous build-up to the finale which everyone awaited. Spectators were breathless when a curtain arose to disclose a "boxed set" which made the stage appear to be a three-walled room. In the center of that set stood a stout-legged steel platform, which served as pedestal for the Silver Venus.

There it was—the Silver Venus!

Polished, glittering, the life-size statue stood within a cabinet constructed entirely of clear glass panels. Isolated in the center of the stage, Judlin's masterpiece showed to full advantage. There were buzzes of appreciation from the audience. The Silver Venus was indeed a creation to make all Dorchester proud.

Four assistants wheeled the platform in a circuit, working hard because of the statue's weight. They faced the Venus toward the audience and marched from the stage, leaving Norgil alone. Pointing dramatically toward the crystal cabinet, Norgil gave a sudden gesture.

Instantly, steamy vapor hissed into the cabinet, issuing from pipes in the platform. Like a goddess returning to Olympus, the Silver Venus was enveloped in those clouds. For a full minute, the process continued, then a signal from Norgil ended it. The magician stepped to the cabinet, whipped open the glass door that formed the front.

Out poured the smoke, swirling as it came, until the interior was clear. But that cabinet no longer contained a solid metal statue. All was vacancy within the crystal walls. The Silver Venus had vanished as elusively as the smoke that had enshrouded it!

THE blinking audience saw the last traces of vapor leave the glass. It was miraculous, the way the statue had disappeared. Two minutes went before the spectators realized that they had hands. Then the applause began, to swell into a thunderous outburst. The curtain was dropping, rising, dropping, rising, with Norgil taking bow after bow beside the empty cabinet.

Ten minutes later, big Claude Frenmore arrived back stage, to find Norgil standing near the door of the room that had been his workshop. Enthusiastically, the Exposition manager congratulated the magician on his sensational climax to an amazing show. Then:

"Where is the Venus now?" asked Frenmore. "Frankly, Norgil, you have left me bewildered."

Norgil pointed to the door of the workshop. It had opened. Fritz and Judlin were ready to push out the heavy mold which made so excellent a shipping case for the Silver Venus. The big chest in the workshop was open; so was the closet door. The only place that the Silver Venus could be was in the crated mold.

Frenmore concluded that; still, it baffled him. He repeated his congratulations, then remembered another reason why he had come back stage.

"The governor is arriving in town," he told Norgil. "We are sending a police escort to meet him. There will be a reception at the Hotel Dorchester. We want you to be there."

"You can count on me," assured Norgil. "I'm only waiting for the armored truck so we can ship this crate back to the museum."

Frenmore was gone, and Norgil had changed to street clothes when the armored truck arrived. Its crew wheeled the crated mold out toward the stage door. From his dressing room, Norgil recognized their faces when they passed. He shouted to an officer at the stage door:

"Stop them! They aren't the truck crew! This is the mob from the Exposition!"

Fritz and others sprang forward. Like Norgil, they expected a surge of cops to cut off the phony crew. But it didn't come. The lone officer at the door started to draw a gun; he halted when the mobbies covered him with their own revolvers.

They had Norgil covered, also. Fritz and the rest were halted, flatfooted. Judlin tried to dive into the workshop, but stopped when he was spotted. Four more hoodlums piled in from the truck. Growled voices threatened doom to any one who made a move.

Norgil realized his own folly. Frenmore had mentioned the governor's arrival, and that a police escort was being sent to meet him. The arrival of the armored truck had made everything look safe. Except for one man, the officers at the auditorium had been detailed to meet the governor.

The magician's face went glum. Thugs grinned when they saw it. Norgil had done one vanishing act with the Silver Venus. It was their hope to stage a sequel with that same statue—a disappearance from which the Silver Venus would never return!

CHAPTER IV.

SPOILS OF DEATH.

CROOKS were in a hurry. They had timed their raid to the right moment, but they had no guarantee of keeping their present advantage. There were too many people in and about the auditorium; if any one managed to slip out and spread the alarm, the jig would be up.

His own recognition of that situation was one reason why Norgil waited calmly. Tough though the invaders were, they didn't want to use their guns if they could avoid it, for that might mar their getaway. It was better to let them lug away their precious crate than to run risk of bloodshed.

That same thought evidently governed Pierre Judlin, for the sculptor also seemed anxious that the crooks should be on their way. There was something, though, in Judlin's manner that made Norgil suddenly forget all other aspects of the scene. Judlin was overplaying his eagerness. He was betraying it with a nervous tremble that began from his upraised hands and ran clear down through his stoopish body.

One thug, close by the workroom door, was prompt to see the short, abrupt nods that Judlin unconsciously gave to his shocky head. The crook called to his pals:

"Look at this guy! He ain't jittery. He's excited over something. Say—maybe the Venus ain't in that big box!"

The raiders held quick parley. The one who had noticed Judlin was told to "take a gander" in the back room.

He did, but reported nothing there. The others, though, weren't satisfied. They jumped to the hunch that Norgil or Judlin might have tried to fox them by stowing the Venus elsewhere. The only way to settle that point was to open the mold.

The crooks had rolled the crate almost to the stage door; the armored truck was just beyond, backed against an outside loading platform. The mold itself was in two sections, like a big violin case. Two men began to lift the lid. Norgil shot another glance across the stage to Judlin, who was covered by the crook beside him.

With it, the magician tried to dispatch a warning. He wanted Judlin to subside; to leave everything to him. But the sculptor didn't catch the magician's flash. He went berserk the instant that the lid of the mold was raised.

"Don't open it!" shrieked Judlin. "Don't——"

The white-haired man was driving forward as he screeched. Simultaneously, Norgil was launching across the stage to grab the crook who had Judlin covered. It wasn't humanly possible to reach that gunner before he fired. Stabs from the revolver ended Judlin's scream.

NORGIL bowled over the murderous mobbie, while Judlin kept going forward in a convulsive stagger. Another crook was aiming at him from beside the mold, where the lid was raised enough to show the figure of the Silver Venus. Though wounded, Judlin tried to jump the aiming gun. Its owner jabbed two more bullets into the sculptor's body.

As Judlin tumbled, crooks aimed for Norgil. Their guns spoke a rapid staccato, but the magician was diving clear, into the workshop. Rolling to safety, he kicked the door shut behind him. The floored thug reached his feet and shouted for the others to get going.

They did. The whole crew threw their weight upon the crate, propelling it aboard the armored truck. Some were shooting as they went, but there were no targets for that hurried fire. Everyone on the stage had dived from sight, including the lone policeman.

Only Judlin's huddled figure lay in view when the rear of the truck slammed shut. A ready driver sped the vehicle from the alley, carrying away the entire mob. The cop remembered his duty, ran out through the stage door; but his pursuit was ludicrous. There was no way of catching up with that swift-moving truck. Crooks had staged their getaway.

EVERYONE else had forgotten the Silver Venus. They were gathered around Judlin when Norgil arrived. He gestured everyone away except Fritz. It was then that the assistant started a hoarse-whispered question, close to Norgil's ear:

"Did you see——"

Norgil interrupted with a nod. He had lifted Judlin's head from the floor. The sculptor's eyes were glazy; Norgil knew that his wounds were mortal. But his ears caught the cool words that Norgil spoke.

"You've got to talk, Judlin," said the magician. "I realize all that's happened. I'll understand."

The tone convinced Judlin. He coughed a reply.

"I lost—lost my head. I—I didn't intend——"

A pause. Norgil purred encouragement.

"The—the envelope," gasped Judlin. "In my pocket"—he was making a feeble effort with his hand—"I—was going to leave it—with you——"

Judlin's head tilted back. The sculptor was dead when Norgil settled him gently to the floor. Finding the envelope, the magician opened it. It contained a sheet of paper written in Judlin's scrawl, and another note, more legible, in a different penmanship. Norgil read both messages; pocketing them, he turned to Fritz.

"What I've just read," said Norgil, "is something that I'd already pieced together in the last few minutes. But there's one fact here"—he tapped the corner of the second note, which was peeking from his pocket—"that I needed. Go get the policeman, Fritz. I need him right away."

Puzzled, Fritz obeyed. He returned bringing three officers instead of one. The cop from the auditorium had met up with two others in a patrol car. Tersely, Norgil told them what he wanted.

"There's an old foundry just outside of town," he said. "That's where the mob has gone with the truck. They intend to melt the Silver Venus. We can't waste time, or bother with red tape. We've got to get there and surprise them."

The officers agreed. Since Norgil seemed positive about the destination, they considered an immediate chase as part of their duty. Norgil had revolvers that he used in the show, and his trunk contained a supply of cartridges other than the usual blanks. The officers welcomed the suggestion that he and Fritz should arm themselves and go along to the foundry. They instructed another of Norgil's assistants to call headquarters and summon reserves.

FIFTEEN minutes brought them to a road near the old foundry. There, they alighted from their cars and crept along a scraggly path that one of the officers knew. From a clump of bushes, they sighted the half-ruined outline of the abandoned foundry, black save for a slight glow that came from the boarded windows of the cellar.

"They're inside," whispered Norgil. "Chances are, they've posted a picket. I'll risk it alone, and signal you when the right time comes."

Officers tried to hold him back, but the magician wouldn't listen. Again he reminded them that time was short, and he added words that finally convinced them that his plan was sound.

"I'm sure I can spring a surprise," Norgil told them. "Something unusual is due to happen. You won't mistake my signal. It will be a gunshot. There isn't time to explain the details, but it's bound to work."

They let him start ahead. Creeping close to the foundry walls, Norgil located the prowling picket that he expected. He waited until the man had passed; then, with consummate stealth, Norgil sidled along until he found a doorway in the darkness.

He was right; only a lone approacher could have managed it. One shout from the picket would have spoiled the surprise, for once inside the doorway, Norgil sighted the glow in the cellar. Crooks were gathered near an open furnace, ready with an old crucible for the melting of the statue.

They were busy at that moment hoisting the stolen mold to an upright position, so they could open it clear of the statue. There was a newcomer among them, directing operations; a big man, whose face turned toward Norgil and was revealed by the light from the furnace.

That man was Claude Frenmore!

The fact that Frenmore was the big shot of the mob produced a surprising angle; but it fitted with all that Norgil had learned. At this moment, it was a secondary matter. Norgil was more interested in the opening of the mold.

Crooks pulled the sections apart. There, poised on its pedestal, stood the Silver Venus tinted by the fire's glow. But hardly did the statue stand alone before Frenmore boomed a frantic warning. The Silver Venus was toppling forward!

Crooks sprang away. They didn't mind if the statue smashed, since they intended to melt it anyway. They wanted to be clear, though, when that half-ton weight smashed the floor. But the statue didn't strike with the expected clang.

Instead, it thudded almost lightly. It didn't buckle; it sprawled. Arms lost their pose and spread upon the floor. The head turned, to stare sideways with its sightless eyes. It was a transformation as amazing as Norgil's vanish of the Silver Venus.

In that climax, the true fact was revealed. The figure from the mold was not a silver statue, despite its metallic glisten. It was the dead body of a handsome woman, painted silver every inch from head to toe!

CHAPTER V.

THE VENUS RETURNS.

"NANETTE! My God! Nanette Grevanne!"

Claude Frenmore had lost his booming tone when he gulped the name. Norgil recognized it, for he had previously guessed who Nanette was, and the notes in his pocket supplied the girl's last name.

Nanette Grevanne had been the sculptor's model when Pierre Judlin created the Silver Venus. In form, in feature, she was the statue's twin. The paint that coated her lifeless body was the final touch that made her an absolute replica of the Silver Venus.

Her beauty, however, was a matter only of surface. Crooks knew her for one of their own ilk. She had helped them swindle Judlin of his modest fortune, then had conspired with them toward the theft of the Silver Venus. Nor was that all. As crooks suspected, Nanette had been ready to sell out her own tribe after they had paid her off for her part in crime.

At this moment Nanette was producing new chaos among her former pals. Dead, her presence here was more startling than if she had been alive. It seemed unexplainable to those who saw the body, and it produced the difference of opinion upon which Norgil counted.

Crooks were shouting at Frenmore, blaming him for the fiasco. They were reminding him that he had told them that the Silver Venus was in the mold; that he had ordered them to commit their daring raid. They were to be paid off from the profits of the melted silver. If Frenmore expected to get by without handing them their dough, he had another guess.

Savagely, Frenmore flung back accusations of his own. Someone had tried to double-cross him. He was looking around the group, trying to pick out the man. A couple of the mobbies decided to side in with the big shot. They shifted over beside Frenmore.

One wary crook was sneaking toward the door, to hold that vantage point before he chose the side he wanted. Another spotted him and rasped for him to stay where he was. Guns were coming from pockets; the slightest spark would start the fireworks.

Norgil provided it. He pounced in from the doorway, meeting the crook who was on the way there. The fellow fired; so did Norgil, and the magician won, both in aim and speed. The sneak crumpled, and Norgil was diving back, unrecognized, when others opened fire.

FIRST to shoot were those who opposed Frenmore. The big shot thought that one of his own sympathizers had become a target. He bellowed for action, and it came. Crooks sprang for one another, to form a milling mass in the furnace light. Frenmore, yellow in proportion to his size, made for the door. Norgil blocked him.

The two locked. Their guns were talking, along with others; but in the grapple the fire was useless. They reeled toward the light, with Frenmore howling Norgil's identity in order to bring the other crooks to his aid. Three crooks were already on the floor, clustered near Nanette's nody; but the rest stopped their fracas. They yelled for Frenmore to twist Norgil about, so that they could get at him.

Before the big shot could manage it, his opportunity was gone. New voices shouted from the doorway. Crooks gaped at four yawning revolvers, handled by Fritz and the three policemen. A few of the thugs tried to gain cover beyond the furnace, firing wildly as they went. A fusillade from the doorway dropped those unwise mobsters.

Norgil's deft hand worked in beneath Frenmore's elbow. With a revolver muzzle poking his ribs, the big shot capitulated. His surrender ended the last vestige of opposition, and by the time the unwounded crooks were lined up gunless, there was no more worry about how to march them from the foundry.

Reserves had arrived, a dozen officers, headed by Dorchester's police chief. Frenmore's gruff protests were useless. Sight of the silvery body on the floor was sufficient evidence to back Norgil's version of the case.

Claude Frenmore, secret controller of the graft and rackets that had ruined the Dorchester Exposition, was trapped with the men who had been his tools.

ALONE of all the captured crooks, Frenmore was taken to the auditorium. On the way Norgil promised new revelations to the impatient police chief. One question, the most important in a sense, was the matter of the Silver Venus. Norgil answered that when they finally stood back stage.

Stooping above the body of Pierre Judlin, the magician produced the key to the museum vault and handed it to the police chief.

"The statue is safe," announced Norgil. "You will find it where it belongs. It never left the vault."

"But how"—the chief was blinking, for he had seen Norgil's show—"why, the statue was here! You vanished it."

"Not exactly," smiled Norgil. "Since the vanishing Venus was intended for this occasion only, I shall explain it. Come into the workshop."

In the rear room, Norgil produced a few small molds of statuettes that had belonged to Judlin.

"We used these for tests," began the magician. "We tried them out with mercury——"

"But what about Venus?" demanded the police chief.

That brought another smile from Norgil.

"Not the god Mercury," explained the magician. "I mean quicksilver—mercury, the liquid metal. It becomes solid, looks exactly like real silver when it is frozen."

"Frozen!"

"Yes. That big chest is a freezing device. We used liquid air for quick results."

THE small mold was filled with mercury. Norgil set it in the refrigerating device and closed the door. There was a muffled hiss when he released a lever. Opening the door, Norgil waited until the chill lessened. Taking a pair of heavy gloves from Fritz, he opened the small mold.

From within, Norgil drew a solid statuette that looked like polished silver. He placed it on a little platform, a miniature of the big one that he had used with the vanishing Venus. Fritz brought a hose from the steam tank. Norgil started the vapor. The statuette being unconfined, was still visible when the smoky jet wreathed about it.

Under the sudden heat, the little figure melted. The liquid mercury poured into the small platform. Norgil had repeated the vanishing Venus on a miniature scale; but on the stage, the confining crystal walls had thickened the vapor, thus hiding the dissolution of the statue.

Having revealed his own methods, Norgil took up those of crooks, with the other factors that had entered.

"This afternoon," he related, "Nanette Grevanne called me by telephone. She wanted to meet me and get cash for information. I ran into trouble, but Nanette didn't know it. So she came here. She didn't find me; instead, she ran into Judlin.

"He hated Nanette, and with good reason. When he learned she had a note, all written, that she wanted to sell me for five hundred dollars, Judlin tried to take it from her. She struggled, and once his fingers were on her throat he couldn't stop them.

"Judlin found himself in charge of a dead body, and a note which told exactly what crooks intended to do tonight. Judlin proved himself ingenious."

STEPPING to the closet, Norgil found a package wrapped in newspaper. He opened it. Out tumbled the clothing that had belonged to Nanette Grevanne. From the shelf Norgil brought an emptied can of paint.

"Judlin silvered the body with aluminum paint," continued Norgil. "He hid it in the closet and later stowed it in the mold, while I was on stage. He felt sure that when crooks found they had Nanette instead of the Silver Venus, they would have to dispose of the body. Meanwhile, Fritz and I thought the mold was empty. We had needed it to make the mercury statue; we were shipping it back to the museum so that the public would still believe that we had used the real Silver Venus.

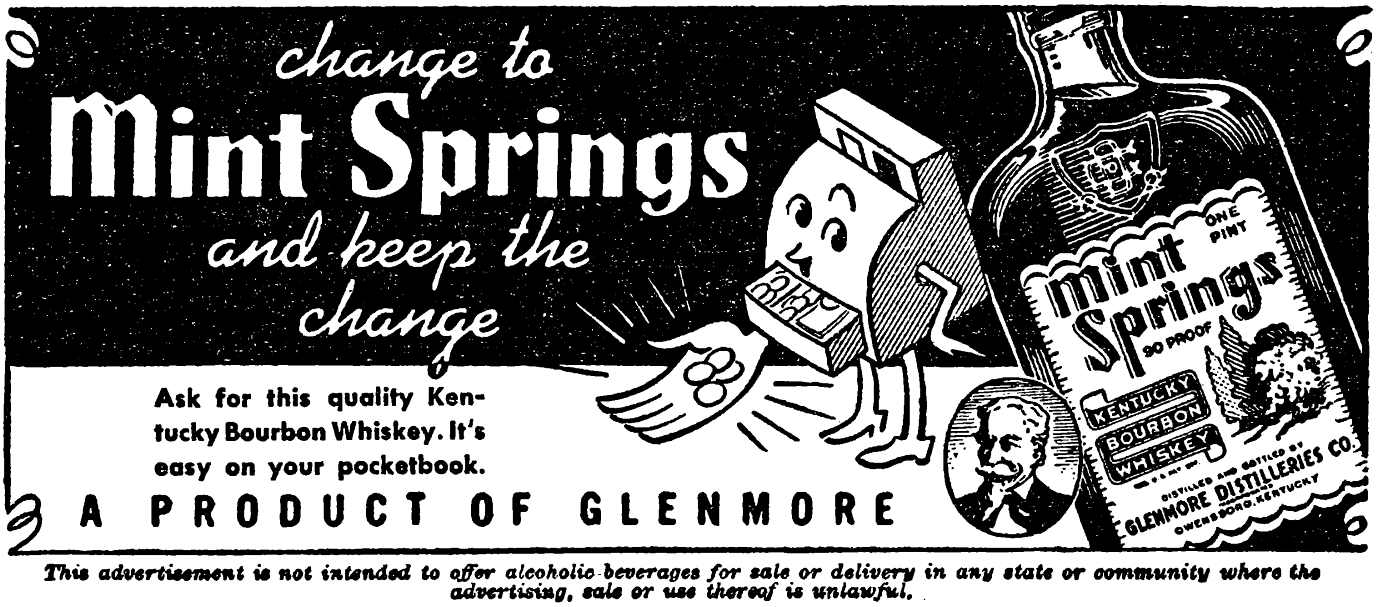
"One thing worried Judlin. He feared that crooks might open the mold and let us glimpse the contents. He betrayed that worry. The crooks misinterpreted it, but the facts flashed to me when Judlin went wild. Afterward, I needed only to know where the crooks had gone. Nanette's letter named the old foundry."

With Nanette's letter, Norgil handed the police chief the added message that Judlin had scrawled. The chief read it aloud. In it, Judlin stated what he had done; also his intention to flee the country, leaving both notes where Norgil would later find them. The news brought a hoarse comment from Frenmore, who stood as a handcuffed listener.

"That lets me out," voiced the big shot. "I had nothing to do with Nanette's death. You can't pin murder on me!"

"You're forgetting Judlin," reminded Norgil. "Your mob murdered him in commission of a crime that you ordered."

The big shot's eyes went frozen. They were that way when the police chief led him out. Beyond the imaginary faces of Nanette Grevanne and Pierre Judlin; past the vision of the Silver Venus, safe where it belonged, Claude Frenmore could see the bars of a lifer's cell!



Ask for this quality Kentucky Bourbon Whiskey. It's easy on your pocketbook.

A PRODUCT OF GLENMORE

This advertisement is not intended to offer alcoholic beverages for sale or delivery in any state or community where the advertising, sale or use thereof is unlawful.

MONKEY MAN

All alone, in the room of death, he waited for the butcher to strike!

By Mark Harper

CHAPTER I.

MURDER WHOLESALE.

IT must have been a humdinger while it lasted. When we, wrecking crew of Homicide, got the call and piled over, there was nothing left—except: three dead men on the floor and the place a shambles.

The big man, flat on his back over a splintered chair that threw his head back and pointed his bushy red beard to the ceiling, had bled all over the place. Without coat, his open shirt showed his huge chest, hair-covered and tattooed. Down near his waistline, on the left side, was a great mass of partly clotted blood.

The dark fellow, just out of reach of the giant's outstretched left hand, was lying on his side, his body facing the big man. The only thing I could see wrong about him, from where I stood, was that he was dead and his head was not facing the big man. It was turned almost in the other direction.

The third one, who had dropped nearest the door, was the only one of the three in a coat, with a cap down beside him. He was a stocky man, not as huge as the big fellow, and he was flat on his face.

Doc Hardwick, the police surgeon, was down on one knee looking this third one over.

Cap, Sergeant—"Dutch" to you—Salzburger and I were just standing around watching and trying to look as if at, a glance, we knew what it was all about. Cass Manning, my sidekick, always made me think of a ferret—when he was on a hot case, and this one looked hot enough to boil. Just now he was all over the place.

He'd already been in whatever room or rooms there were beyond this one, while we'd only looked at the door. He wasn't looking at the bodies; he hadn't, except the first quick glance, so far as I had seen. But Cass was snooping around the room, peering at the floor and the walls, giving what furniture was left standing and what was ruined the once-over. And every step he took, he looked first to see where his foot was going.

Cap glanced once at me, then

looked quickly away. We'd both been caught more than once when we thought we were dead right, only to have Cass show us up as a couple of monkeys. Lately, we had got into the habit of keeping quiet and looking wise until Cass made the first crack.

"Bullet did for this one," Doc said casually, from where he was kneeling. "Big slug. Heart. Instantaneous."

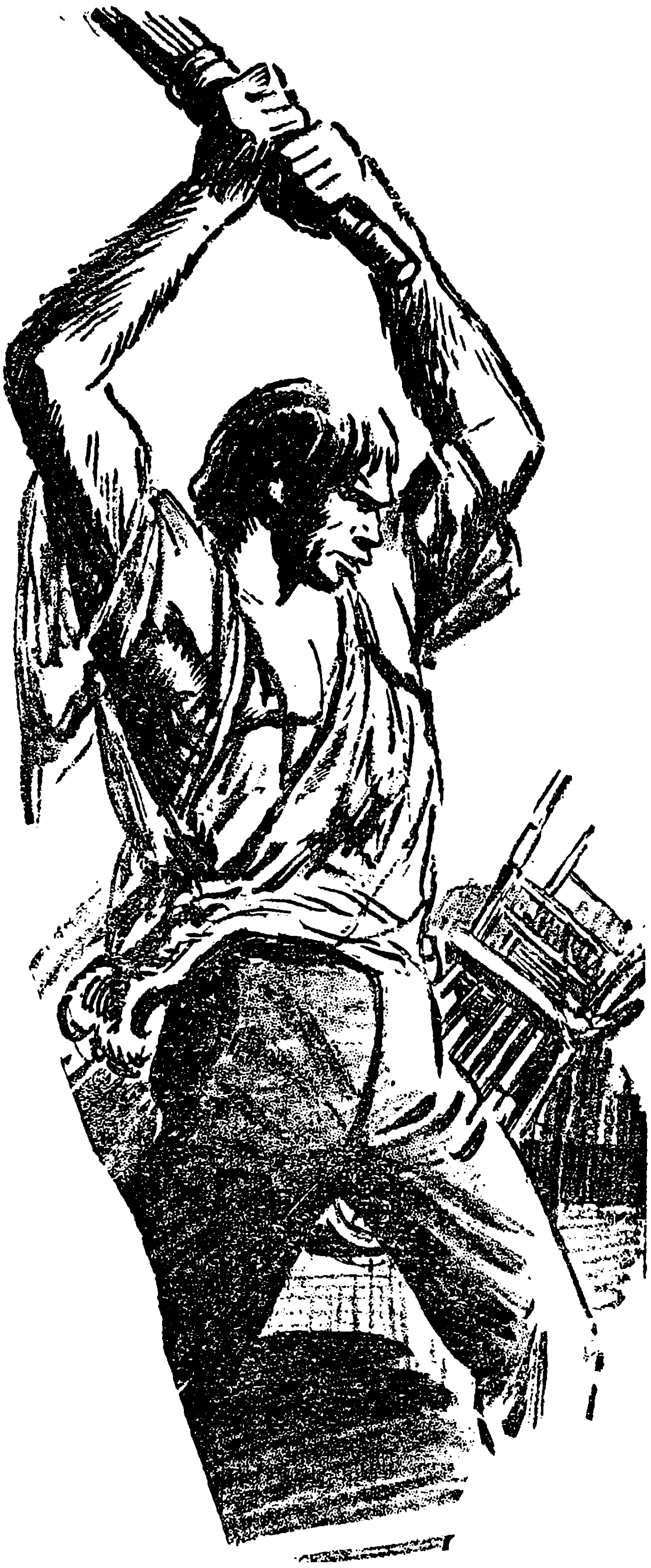
He raised his head and turned it enough to glance over to the big redhead; then he nodded. We'd all seen the .45 lying close to the man's right hand, so we didn't even look.

That, of course, had been the shot that had brought the next-door night watchman boiling out of the factory building and, instead of going back inside to phone, he'd paddled down to the call box on the corner and sent his squawk in to us.

WE'D piled into the squad car, all but Cass Manning. He'd thought to pick up Doc, taking the roadster which he and I shared together. We'd come over mostly on two wheels, but when we got here, Cass was talking with the night watchman and had gone a little way into the yard to look things over there, while waiting for us to come up.

It was a kind of funny layout, anyway. This narrow, four-storied building we were now in stood on the corner. The ground floor once held a shop of some sort, probably groceries, but was now vacant. We were on the third. The second was dark and we hadn't seen or heard anyone there, any more than there seemed to be anyone on the one above us.

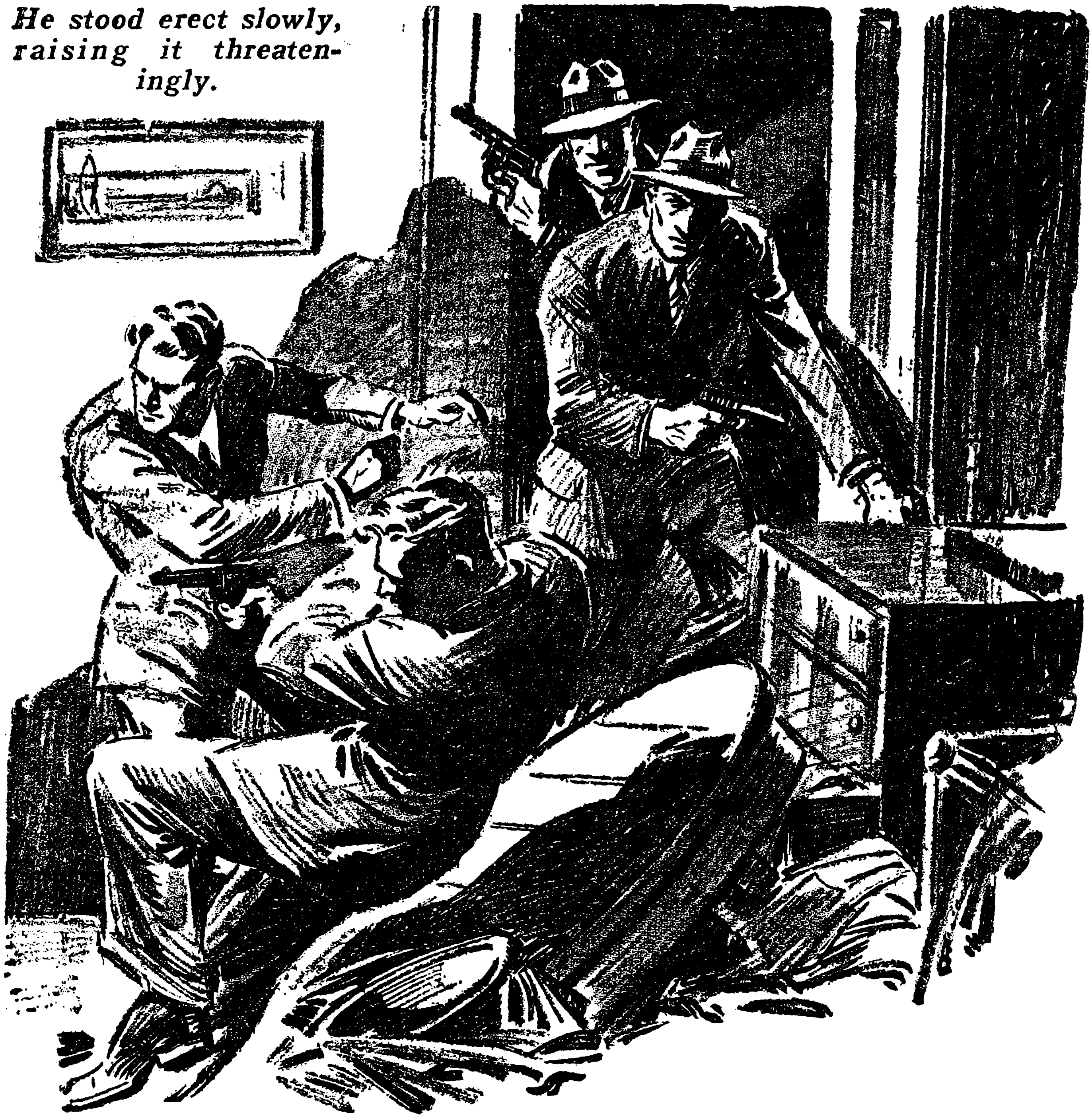
When the lot had been bought for the factory, the guy who'd owned this relic had held out for a price.



He didn't get it, and the factory building was shoved up right alongside, about ten feet from the wall, with what they used for an alley to the backyard running between. Whoever had the deed now would take anything to help against taxes, but there wasn't anything about the place to attract tenants.

Cass gave us this on our way upstairs. He'd also told us that the

He stood erect slowly, raising it threateningly.



watchman was in the office at the near corner when he heard the shot, and had been outside in two seconds. He'd made his call right there on the corner and, afterward, had stood in the street before the house until Cass came along. And during that time, no one had come out of the little building, and he hadn't heard another sound.

"This one got it with a knife." Doc had moved over to the big redheaded fellow and pulled or cut away his shirt. What he exposed wasn't nice to look at. "Between the lower ribs and upward to the heart—see?" Doc explained.

"Malay type. Interesting." Cass spoke from one corner of the room where he was hunkered, with a coat or maybe a vest in his hands.

"A terrific blow, even with a keen knife," Doc said, "and expertly driven. Hum. You said Malay, Cass?"

"That goes for a lot of races down under," Cass said. "And a trick a white man could learn. See if there is any sign of a twist where the blade went in, Doc."

Doc explored with his fingers, opening the edges of the ghastly wound.

"Yes. Quite evident, I should say."

"What would that mean, Cass?" Dutch asked. Dutch was a big fellow; not so tall perhaps, but he packed close to two hundred and forty and he puffed and panted a little whenever he talked.

Cass was busy again with whatever he was looking over.

"Most anything," he mumbled.

"Curious—that." Doc pointed to a tattooed design on the big man's chest, partly obscured by the thick red hair until it ran upward and over to both shoulders.

"Hey, I want to see that!" Cass came over, and I saw it was a coat he had in his hands. Before looking at the tattoo, however, he bent over and, holding the coat by its shoulder tips, fitted it against the big man's body. He then held the coat aside and peered closely at the tailor markings.

When he stood up, he handed the captain a couple of letters.

"Out of this fellow's coat," he said, tossed the coat aside and went back to the other side of the room again.

It was pretty quiet then, while Doc was looking over the last man. No one seemed to have anything to say and the only sound in the room was Dutch's heavy breathing. I guess Dutch got a little nervous, or else thought it was his turn to do a little brain work. He'd taken about a step when Cass yelled:

"Look out!"

FOR his heft, Dutch was quick. He jumped about a foot and turned all the way around with the same movement, his hand streaking for his gun. And I'll say that yell, right in the midst of all that silence, almost jumped me, too.

Dutch didn't see anything to shoot at, and he glared over at Cass.

"What you tryin' to do, kid?" he grumbled. "Bogy-man me?"

"Look where you were stepping, you big beef," Cass snarled at him.

Dutch looked.

"Ain't nothing there, honest."

"What've you got eyesight for, anyway?" Cass asked him, up on his feet.

"Hell, you don't mean that little weeney bit o' plaster?"

Dutch had shoved his pistol back. He turned his thick neck, squinted upward at the ceiling directly over his head, then looked down again and with a stout forefinger extended, was bending still lower when Manning stopped him.

"Here—let that alone!" Cass came over quickly, fumbling in his pocket. "Dutch," he said, "you're all right in getting a confession; no one better. Otherwise"—he pulled a folded magnifying glass from his pocket and began to open it—"you're just something that's in the way."

He got down on both knees and a hand to study Dutch's bit of plaster. In about a second he'd put away the glass, taken out a small clean envelope and with the flap open was gathering up the whitish particles, using his handkerchief carefully to brush them in.

"Never saw anything like that," Doc said, as if he were talking to himself. "Head twisted clean around until the vertabrae snapped."

We looked over him, but the three of us, Cap, Dutch and I, didn't move our feet. Doc was down on one knee again, holding the man's head in his two hands and looking over at us. He wiggled it a little to show us how loose it was. I'm pretty hard, but it made me feel sick in the stomach.

"Heh—— What's this?"

Doc took his left hand from under the man's head and it wabbled back to the floor. He looked at his fingers. They were stained with blood. He twisted the head round again.

"My God!" he snapped. "Will you fellows look at this!"

Cap and I started over.

"Please may I go, too?" Dutch asked Cass, with sarcastic mildness.

"If you watch where you put those hoofs," Cass told him grimly. Dutch joined us, bending nearer, with one hand grasping my arm.

DOC had the dark man's head twisted back and around. He flipped the ear that had lain underneath. It was all but severed, with marks of a ragged bite.

"Dog," Dutch panted. "Big police dog, to make a bite like that." He looked around. "But you tell me, one of you wise guys, how'n hell a dog got away from here without the watchman seeing him? Or didn't he say anything about a dog, Cass?"

"Too wide, huh?" Cass asked Doc.

"Uh-huh."

"Human, of course?"

"That's right." Doc let the head flop back and stood up. "That's all here, Cap, I guess. You can send 'em away as far 's I'm concerned."

"What killed him—the dark one?" Cap asked.

"Broken neck. And a damned strong man had to do it." He glanced over at the big redhead. Cass frowned.

"I'll get the boys up," Cap said. "Photographer first."

"Just a minute," Cass told him.

We watched him.

As long as I've known Manning and seen him at work, I couldn't even guess what was going in that mind of his. He stepped back a little, toward the door we'd come in, then looked the whole scene over with just one sweeping glance and walked over to the redhead. Stooping at his feet, he looked at the bottom of the man's shoes; then got out another little envelope and his handkerchief and did some more brushing of one heel.

He nodded. "All right, Cap," he said briskly, and when the captain started toward the door, added: "Wish you'd have one of the boys downstairs see if the key is on the inside of the back door. Also, you might send a couple through all the floors except this one, checking on every door locked. I don't believe they will find anything, but we want to be sure."

"All covered," Cap growled. "We also work on the Force."

Doc was looking around the room.

"Bath of a sort in there," Cass told him, with a nod toward the inner door. "Wish you'd be careful not to move anything, Doc. And if you don't mind, be good enough to use your handkerchief instead of a towel, if there is one."

"One clean case if I ever saw one," Dutch said, as Doc went out.

"How's that?" I asked him. I didn't expect Dutch to tell me anything, but thought if he started talking it might draw Manning out.

"We got 'em all here," Dutch said. "This's one time we don't have to guess up no clues 'r hunt all over hell's kitchen for the murderer."

Cap came back in, and Doc appeared from the other door, wiping his hands on a handkerchief.

"Anything to talk about yet?" Cap asked Manning.

Cass was leaning against one wall, sunk in a deep study. He looked up and grinned.

"Not necessary." He nodded toward Dutch. "He's got it all settled."

"Yeah? Well, spill it, Dutch."

CHAPTER II.

MAN ON THE ROOF.

DUTCH eased his belt.

"Course I ain't got anything you guys haven't," he said. "It's just plain facts. The big guy was twisting the dark feller's neck. Doc said it took a strong guy, an' you can see for yourselves he was the strongest. Then this one here"—he nodded toward the body nearest the door—"got in with his knife. 'Fore the big feller went out, he up and shot the guy. All there's to it."

"All," Cass said slowly, "except a few minor details. "What'd he do with the knife?"

"Prob'bly flipped it away somewheres. I ain't started to look for it yet. You yapped every time I moved."

"You can start now," Cass told him. "Another little item: Who bit the dark man's ear?"

"How'n hell would I know that?"

"Look 'em over." Cass directed.

"No use looking at that one, Dutch," Doc told him. "He couldn't very well bite his own ear."

"What you mean—look 'em over?" Dutch queried.

"See any blood on their mouths?" said Cass.

"Well——"

"Cut out the baloney," Cap growled. "We're to look for still a fourth man, huh, Cass?"

"Let me ask him just one more, Cap," Cass said. "What were they fighting about, Dutch?"

"You tell me, smarty." Dutch was getting roiled. Cass went on:

"That little weeney bit of plaster, Dutch. Only it doesn't happen to be plaster. It was a pearl, and I should judge an unusually large one. But even if it was large, when you consider the matter, just one pearl would seem to be a small thing for three men to be killed over."

Which was Manning's way of telling us that somewhere around, there was or had been a stack of pearls valuable enough for someone to be willing to do this wholesale killing in order to get them.

"Only one person, Cap," Cass said.

"I suppose you got something to make you so sure? He must be some heller to do all this massacre."

Manning shook his head at Doc's remark.

"Might be a good idea, Cap," he said, "to have that watchman up here to look them over. He's seen some of these men off and on for the past month. He said there were three, he thought, who had this place. It might help if we knew they were these three."

"You mean, if one was a stranger he might have been a helper to the fourth man?"

"Something like that, Cap. It would be more reasonable."

"We'll see," the captain finished.

AS the captain went out the door, the photographer and fingerprint men came in. Cass nodded to me, and I followed him through the doorway that led to the other rooms. He stopped on the threshold of a door beyond.

"Guess you haven't had a chance to look this over, inside and out?" He made it a question.

"No," I told him. "You remember we came right up."

"All right. Then think while I tell you," Cass said. "This house stands by itself. At the rear, it is forty feet to the next building."

"Only ten feet to the factory." I put in.

"We'll come to that later. The point is that this roof offers no escape or approach. The factory wall on this side is blank, and too high to make any sort of ladder from its roof to this one at all feasible."

"You found the downstairs back door locked?"

"I've an idea it's also nailed from the inside. If the key is found on the inside, we'll know our man didn't leave that way, and I'm satisfied he didn't come in that way. That is, he came only in a way that would make his leaving possible."

"Riddles, Cass."

"Come; I'll show you something," he suggested.

The room we'd paused in had a couple of rumpled beds. We went into another with a single cot whose coverings had not been disturbed. Cass nodded toward it, then turned right into a small kitchen, closed the door and we were in darkness. He went directly to one of the two windows, which was open as far as the sash would allow.

Beside him, I looked out onto a fire escape which passed the window within an arm's length.

"Cinch," I said.

"Think so? From down below I saw it differently. Take a look."

I leaned out and peered downward. There was a low-wattage light over in the factory yard close to the loading sheds. By its faint illumination, it seemed to me that the fire escape ended at the floor below us. I said as much to Cass.

"Right," he agreed. "The drop and lower section taken out."

"A guy could climb a rope."

"Impossible to throw it to catch," Cass explained.

"Then——"

He gripped my arm suddenly, hard.

"Look up there," he breathed, although we had been speaking in low tones. "Up—on the edge of the roof—just back from the corner."

I TURNED my head quickly. The back of the factory building seemed just flush with where we stood. Up on the parapet of that wall, well above us, I saw a curious figure against the sky behind it. It was moving away from us, as if it had just turned back from the corner.

It might have been a man, but if it was, it was a damned funny man. It was stooped over, with long arms dangling so low that it gave the impression of moving on both feet and hands, as a huge ape walks.

Cass was tugging at his gun, but we were cramped in the window and I didn't want to lose sight of the thing by moving back to give him room. In that instant, whatever the thing was, it turned its head quickly in our direction, then suddenly leaped inward and disappeared from our view.

"Quick!" Manning hissed.

I started to get out the window.

"Thirty-foot drop," he snapped. "Come on!"

We pounded back through the rooms, but a whole lot of people were in the way in the big room and crowded up and down the narrow stairs. It must have taken a couple of minutes or more to make the street, where the morgue wagon was just driving off.

The gate at the alley entrance, which had been open on our arrival, no doubt on Manning's insistence, was now closed. He shook it against its lock. We turned from it and raced along the factory wall and around the corner.

The building made a long ell on this side, and we went the length of it more slowly. There were two fire escapes on the side and a single one at the far end, as we saw when we got to the corner. The drop from any one was not more than ten feet.

Cass looked over the dimly lighted street beyond and shook his head. He remarked:

"Gone, a thousand to one, but I know better what to look for now."

"How about searching the factory?"

"He would lose a hundred men in that place; besides, he wouldn't stick that close. Any man who had the nerve to wait around and watch the finish, would have sense enough to clear out of the neighborhood, especially if he saw us, as I expect he did."

"It was really a man then?"

Cass ignored that one. "But I'm obliged to him just the same," he said.

"Huh?"

"If he'd gotten the pearls, would he have waited for anything?"

"I'm getting as dumb as Dutch," I growled. "But a man that walks like an ape shouldn't be hard to put the finger on."

"He doesn't," Cass snapped. "Not where you would see him. I'll wager he could pass you now and you wouldn't pick him."

"How much?" I got in quickly.

"Twenty bucks. Come on, let's get back."

CHAPTER III.

VIGIL.

WE were halfway down the block before Cass spoke again. I hadn't felt like talking, either. He said:

"Guess we'll have to split on this tonight. I'll have to take these envelopes over to Jake Lazerus, on Pine, and see what he can make out of the stuff—size, color and all that. From what I could see with my glass, and I got a bit of the outside leaf, I'd say Barrier Reef, or at least Australian waters. That would give us a starting point, if he agrees, and I'll have to get off some cables."

"You don't figure a local robbery then?"

"Several things against it. The big red-headed fellow was English or Australian. Two letters from London didn't give us anything but a name. The dark chap had a touch of Malay or Yunnan. Then this man we saw handled himself up there as if he were at home on a yardarm. There's also that trick with a knife. That all adds up to stuff brought over."

"So, all right. What's on your mind for me, Cass?"

"Stash out up here tonight," he ordered.

"Thanks—plenty!"

Manning grinned at me.

"Knew you'd like it. Chances are the murderer won't come back for a day or two. Still, you might have a visitor, and we don't want to miss him. I'll take on tomorrow night."

"Figured how he got in and out, Cass?" I asked him.

"That's a puzzler," was all he'd say, and I knew better than to press him. He had an idea all right; I was sure of that, but was equally certain he wouldn't speak of it until he had it all worked out.

We came up to the crowd that had gathered along the sidewalk. I was about to barge straight through them, but Manning started around and I followed him. A couple of harness bulls were telling them the show was over and to go home, and some of them commenced to move off.

As we turned to go up the steps, we had to pass around two who appeared somewhat better dressed than most of the casual crowd. One, a small man with glasses, was apparently explaining what had happened to a big fellow, in black felt hat. As we approached, the big man stepped aside, moving with a decided limp.

What probably made me look at him twice was the curious way he carried his arms. Instead of hanging straight down, they were bent at the elbows, with the hands drooping down at his waist, like a paralytic. I didn't make much of his face, and I wasn't interested.

FOR some reason, the light was off at the second floor. Cass went to the window and stood there peering out for a full minute, while I waited.

Upstairs, Cap asked us, a little sarcastically, what we had been chasing. Everyone else had gone except the captain and Dutch Salzburger. Manning told him we'd been following a hunch, and Cap let it go at that.

Cass explained what we'd decided, and asked Cap if he had any better ideas. I hoped he would have, but he hadn't. He was used to the way the two of us worked and usually gave us our heads. If we didn't turn up the right thing, then we got hell.

Dutch helped me bring the cot in from the farthest room, and I put it in a corner of the big room where there was a jog around the stair well. I didn't expect to sleep any, but there wasn't a whole chair left in that room and what I'd seen in the others didn't look comfortable.

Manning righted a table, propped up two of its legs that had been broken off and stuck it in front of the cot. He'd seen a coat rack in one of the rooms, that I'd missed, dug out some sort of clothes to hang on it and put that up at one end of the table next the wall which had the entrance door.

He made me lie down, took a squint from the middle of the room, then stuck a lot of junk on the table.

I said: "To hell with that," got up and opened the window behind me a little way. I wasn't crazy about the different odors and scents in that room.

Cap and Dutch were leaning against a wall, waiting. Cap was giving the place a keen, last once-over. Chances were he hadn't missed anything Manning had seen, but he was willing to let Cass do the talking first. The Dutchman was watching me with a broad grin on his round, fat face. I asked him if he wanted to take my place, and he said the cot didn't look comfortable. Cass came over.

"I'll take your twenty, kid," he said in a low tone, "and if I'm wrong, I'll give back forty."

"What the——"

"Didn't you see the big man in a black hat down there? You went right past him," Cass said.

"That guy couldn't run around on a roof edge. He could hardly walk."

"Did you notice his arms?"

"Paralytic."

"Yeah—just like his limp. Those arms of his were at least six inches longer than those of an ordinary man. If they'd hung down, you wouldn't have missed it."

"Why the hell didn't you jump him?" I said testily.

"And prove—what? Who's to identify him? I doubt if he left a fingerprint in the place. He drove off in a taxi and I got the number, but we don't want to take him any place but right here. And he'll come back; I'm sure of that now."

Cap left the wall and moved over.

"What're you two mumbling about?" he asked, and as if knowing he wouldn't get the answer, added: "Watchman identified the man with the beard and the dark fellow as the roomers here. Other one was a stranger."

Dutch yawned real loud and began to shuffle heavily toward the door. Manning looked at his watch.

"Quarter to twelve, kid," he said. "Five hours and you'll have daylight. Cass stepped over to the light switch. "All right, Cap." And to me: "Got everything in the room fixed in your mind?"

I nodded sourly, and he snapped the switch.

I SAT on the cot with my back to the wall—pitch black it was, with the light just off—and tried to make myself believe I didn't mind. But I followed the sound of their footsteps all the way down and every damned noise the squad car made until it faded entirely.

After that, nothing; not the faintest whisper. The low, far-off rumble of the city didn't count. Anyway, I could barely hear it and didn't listen for it; and when the cot squeaked, I knew I'd made it. That was when I took my pistol out of the holster and held it with my hand resting beside me.

I suppose I have as much imagination as the next fellow, although a man didn't need imagination in that place and after what I'd seen in it. For a time, I cussed Manning for not taking the big guy and trusting to luck we'd land something on him before he'd outwait the vagrancy charge. And for something better to thing of, or perhaps to keep from thinking of something else, I doped out the reasons why Manning was sure the charge wouldn't stick.

But that was the way Cass liked to play these cases—catch a man dead to rights—and I suppose he'd wait out here a week, or a month for that matter, until, on his theory, the guy would come back for the rest of the stuff.

One thing; I was holding on to my twenty. I didn't believe for a moment the well-dressed guy I'd passed downstairs was the monkey I'd seen hopping around the factory roof. His arms could be a foot longer than everyone else, and I still wouldn't believe it—not twenty dollars' worth anyway. But I did agree with Manning that whoever the killer was, he would be a fool to come back tonight.

I settled myself more comfortably on that thought, then some kind of a sound made me sit up a little straighter. I couldn't make out what it was or where it came from. Sort of a light thud, it seemed to me. Might have been a rat jumping to the floor, or a loose shutter closing in the wind. Only there wasn't any wind and I couldn't remember any shutters, and outside of this floor there was nothing in the whole damned building to attract even a rat for a tenant.

Then I thought of the window a little open at my back, with the street outside, and slumped back again, thinking what a hell of a fellow I was to be on Homicide and jittery as a girl. Just the same, it wasn't so easy to get out of your mind the picture of that knife wound, the guy's twisted head and flopping ear—not when you were sitting in the pitch dark where it had just happened. And the bird who'd done it wandering around somewhere on the loose!

Still, if you ask me, I'd prefer taking a peek at him than sitting there, doing nothing but think and listen for more rats jumping around.

So I set myself to try to dope out what Manning himself hadn't understood; how the killer had got in here, then out again without anyone seeing him. He could have come up the stairs, so far as coming in was concerned, but he didn't go out that way. And he hadn't hidden somewhere in the building. Cap didn't do thinks that way. That building, every foot of it, was being covered while we were coming up.

Then I started to think of the lopped-off fire escape, and somehow it got all twisted up in my mind with a whole bunch of monkeys, running up and down on the iron steps, sliding down the rail and jumping over each from landing to landing.

I don't know how long that had lasted; maybe five minutes, perhaps an hour. And I didn't know what had brought me staring wide awake, until I heard the sound again.

CHAPTER IV.

A KILLER RETURNS.

IT was a key turning in the lock away downstairs. And although it was faint, it echoed all the way up that stair well, a brittle, hollow sound. That must have been when the door was locked on the inside; for soon there were steps on the bare treads, coming right up, careless of the noise they made.

But I wasn't making any noise. I eased myself a little from the wall and wriggled my head to take the crick out of my neck; then I let myself down sidewise, as low as I could on one elbow, and it wasn't the arm where I held my pistol.

The steps came right on, confident as hell, beat along the corridor below and started up this last flight. And while I was listening to them, I was groping to bring something out of my mind, something that seemed to me important if I could think what it was.

I got as far as an idea that it had to do either with what I'd been dreaming or with what had brought me suddenly awake, when the steps hit the landing outside and came to the door. There was more sound of a key in a lock, then the door swung open but no light came in with it. And I couldn't see what did.

Then the door was closed and I could hear the lock snap. Footsteps shuffled with the sound of a hand scraping on the wall. Then the switch clicked and light came on.

I don't know what I expected to see, but anyway what I did see surprised me. A youngish fellow was standing against the wall, rather short, stocky and looking sound as a nut. His felt hat was pushed back on his head, showing rumpled lightish hair. English, or perhaps Welsh, I guessed, but didn't think more about it then.

He was standing stock-still flat against the wall, and he was staring, round-eyed with amazement, at the wreckage in the room.

I eased still a little lower as his

eyes started to wander from side to side, then puckered. You could see he was trying to dope out what in hell had happened there.

Then, suddenly, his expression changed all at once. His eyes grew round again; his face seemed to drain of color.

"You—Lefferts!" It was a sort of whispered gasp.

I LOOKED where he was looking—at the door opposite.

And in that doorway was something that made me want to gasp, too.

He was a big fellow all right. Not as tall as the big redhead; but his shoulders were broad and thick. His head was large, with coarse, heavy features, except his eyes which were small and black and shining as he looked at the fellow against the wall, and his thick lips were parted, showing strong white teeth.

What got me most was the way he was standing, stooped over with his arms swinging back and forth, and I'm swearing they passed his legs well below the knees.

I knew then what I'd been trying to think. It wasn't the key in the lock that had wakened me. It was a sound on that floor, probably in the next room. I knew too that my twenty was gone, but I didn't worry about that. My worry was to see if I could ever pay it, with that brute there, gun or no gun.

The young fellow swallowed. I could hear him, though I didn't look.

"Lefferts!" he said again, hoarsely. "Where'd you come from? What has happened here?"

The man in the doorway straightened up a little and took a couple of steps into the room. His toes, if you get the sense of it, seemed to grip the floor as he walked. And he didn't limp. His expression didn't change; just that wolfish grin of eyes and white teeth. He didn't say anything.

"Are Bowes and Kinsall in there?" the young fellow asked, his tone a little louder. "I don't hear them. Where are they? What are you doing here?"

"You know what I've come for, Canby," the big man said. His voice was low, almost soft, but deep and sort of rumbling. "Bowes and Kinsall? They are now in the morgue. Fencher went with them. But I didn't do that—not to Fencher. That was Bowes."

"They——" Canby couldn't seem to get the rest out. I still didn't look at him. I could have shot Lefferts then, and I wish to hell I had. Maybe the looks of him fascinated me, but I guess after all I wanted to get the story.

"I might as well tell you, Canby," Lefferts said. "It will make you see reason quicker, and save me time."

"But I don't know anything. I've been away—out of town."

"Be quiet. Listen. Fencher came up here for me, after we found where you were hiding. I came in another way—never mind how. Fencher asked them for our share of the pearls."

"But you didn't have any left," Canby said. "You know that, Lefferts."

"I know Bowes and Kinsall left me poisoned drunk when I was still to get some of the pearls; that you sneaked up the coast and sailed from Sydney."

"I didn't have anything to do with that, Lefferts."

"We trailed you over here and found you. Bowes laughed at Fencher. Then I came in. Listen, you fool, Fencher held his gun on

Bowes while I worked on Kinsall, to learn where they've been hidden. Kinsall couldn't stand pain. Perhaps you know that, Canby. He'd have told me—before his ear came off, but Bowes started for me and——"

HE stopped suddenly, still glaring at Canby, and didn't say a word for ten seconds. Then he continued:

"Fencher shot him—in the arm, I guess. Bowes took the gun away and shot him while I was"—he raised both hands before him, holding them as if grasping something round, then turned them swiftly—"twisting Kinsall's neck. Then I put a knife in Bowes, and had to run for it—without the pearls. But I'm back now, and you are here, Canby. We are all alone—with the pearls. You understand now, don't you, Canby?"

I guess the young fellow, Canby, had more guts than I'd given him credit for.

"I told you I've been away, Lefferts," he said, and his voice was stronger. "How do I know what they did with them? I took some with me to show. You can have them if you clear out. Here."

Canby started to reach for his pocket, but Lefferts stopped him.

"Keep your hands where they are, Canby. Just tell me; are you going to show me where the pile is?"

"What's the use?" Canby said hoarsely. "You'll try to kill me anyway, whether I do or not."

"*Try* to kill you, Canby?" His deep voice rumbled into a laugh, but he wasn't smiling. "Come—are you going to show me, or would you like to lose an ear first?"

Without waiting for an answer, Lefferts stooped slowly, with his eyes still on Canby, and grasped a heavy piece of some broken furniture. He stood erect slowly, raising it threateningly.

Then, turning like lightning, he drove it straight at me.

TRUSTING to the stuff on the table and their attention on each other, I had come slowly, noiselessly half erect. It was a mistake.

I couldn't dodge. I couldn't even fire. It was too quick, and it caught me napping.

It struck me on the hand I was raising, knocked the pistol somewhere, whirled over and hit me smack on the head. I saw stars.

I also saw big Lefferts. He didn't run for me. He jumped, and the second one took him clean over the table. I guess it was while he was in mid-air that I went under it and came up on the other side.

I had a flash of Canby getting out the door. I didn't blame him. I'd 've gone too if I'd had time. I didn't. Lefferts just brushed that table away from between us and I heard it splinter as it hit the wall.

Maybe I should explain why Cass Manning was content to team up with me. It wasn't for my wits, not the brand I'd shown tonight. But I was six feet and packed two hundred pounds solid; and I'd taken tops in everything in that playhouse they call the police academy. I was supposed to handle the rough stuff for the pair of us.

And Lefferts came right after me, grinning, with those strong white teeth of his showing.

I feinted backward, then let him have lefts and rights as hard as I ever drove them; harder, I think. I expected him to go down. He didn't. He just shook his head, and the blood from his smashed nose and mouth dripped off his chin.

I tried everything I knew. Those long arms of his reached out; one held me off so I couldn't reach him, the other caught my wrist, twisted it and he pulled me in toward him.

One hand went around my throat. I pounded his stomach. I tried to throw him, to trip his legs. I couldn't, and I've made a monkey out of Dutch Salzburger. His other hand grabbed the top of my head. He turned my neck slowly. His face was close to mine. I felt my neck twisting against my body. I saw his mouth opening with those gleaming white teeth.

FROM somewhere, I heard an explosion. I saw the mouth closing, felt those grips slowly relax, and I tore myself away, leaping backward as he thudded to the floor.

"All right, kid," Cass Manning was saying, "I guess I timed it almost too close."

After a while I got my breath, and now that it was over I wanted to be hard.

"Where the hell did you come from, Cass?" I growled at him.

"Oh, I had it doped out all right, but I didn't guess the means right off."

"Well, spill it," I told him. "I'd sort of like to know."

"Of course he had to swing over, from that back wall of the factory," Cass explained. "I wanted to see what he used. I had to be quiet and not move around much, or he would have got on to me."

"You mean——" I stared.

"Of course. I went into the factory as soon as I left you. He unwound a factory hose through the nearest window and a couple of flights up, brought it back to a fire escape farther along and just swung over. I'll say he judged it to a nicety."

" 'D you see him do it?"

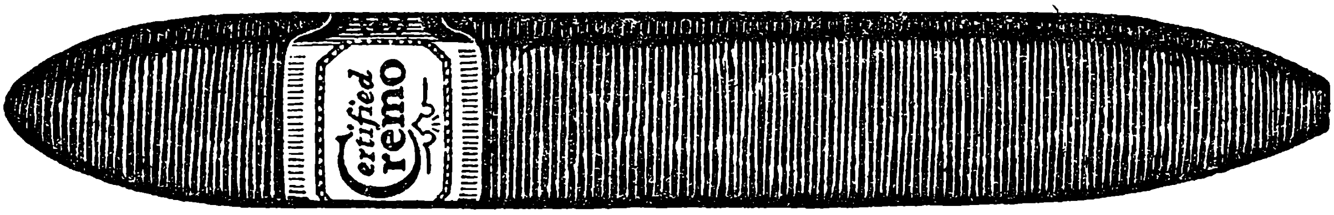
"Sure."

"When?"

"About an hour ago," Cass stated. "I had to wait a little. Then it took me all that time to get it back off this fire escape without making a noise. The longest part was getting it where I could jump off for the right swing. Well, I got here in time; so that's that. Get the story?"

"Sure. All but the——"

I stopped. There was a noise coming up the stairs like an elephant marching. Dutch came in with Canby. Cass had posted him across the street, and he'd nabbed Canby coming out. Then we got the rest of the story—and the pearls.



You don't have to pay 5¢ for a fine long-filler cigar...

SMOKE Cremo NOW 3 FOR 10¢

Our "Forgotten Heroes"

Gregory W. O'Keefe, An Outstanding Example of the Efficient but Little Known Customs Service.

By Ned O'Doherty

WHEN we think of famous Crime Busters, the name of J. Edgar Hoover and others equally famous immediately flash through our minds. The fact that these men are constantly before the public eye causes them to receive first consideration.

But there is another kind of Crime Buster of whom we seldom hear. He is reticent, retiring, and completely disinterested in newspaper publicity. His is the keen brain of the scientific investigator. He feels that his official activities are best left unproclaimed. He works quietly, unobtrusively, matching wits daily with some of the cleverest criminal minds in the world. He is truly the forgotten Crime Buster, the unsung hero—and he wants it that way!

Still, with all his shyness, this law enforcement officer's reputation is world wide. He is the revenue-producing right arm of the United States Treasury Department. He is the guardian of the borders of our country, the first line of defense against foreign invaders. He is on duty on all piers to protect the revenue; he is in fast boats which patrol the waters to intercept smugglers, alien-runners and others.

He is, in short, your alert Customs Guard, your Customs Inspector, your Customs Harbor Patrol; most important of all, he is your U. S. Customs Agent. He is well-dressed, this Customs Agent, he is ever present on the busy piers where huge ocean liners dump their thousands of passengers.

Seated in his pretentious office in the New York Custom House is a man whose tone is deep, cultured; whose dress is conservative, whose every word and action denotes the gentleman. In his smooth, clean-shaven face, you will find nothing to denote the tough Crime Buster. You will note, however, the firm jaw, the set lips, and suddenly you will realize that a pair of exceptionally keen eyes are upon you—eyes that appear to be searching your deepest thoughts.

You will have the impression that although this man appears at ease in his big leather chair, he could, in a flash, be on his feet, ready for anything that might happen. And you will quickly decide that your preference would be to know this man as a friend—never as an enemy!

You will be justified in feeling thus, for you will be sitting opposite Gregory W. O'Keefe, Assistant Collector of Customs at the Port of New York. You will be made to feel at ease—if your visit is a friendly one—by a man who has risen in the Customs ranks by sheer ability and ability alone; a man who has climbed that tough old ladder of success from the very lowest rung to the very highest.

Gregory O'Keefe was born in Grassy Point, Rockland County, New York, on July 9, 1885. Upon completing his education, he was appointed to the Customs Service as temporary inspector, June 3, 1907. A short time later he passed the examination and became a regular Inspector of Customs.

As an Inspector of Customs, Gregory O'Keefe was outstanding in the performance of that important office. He boarded vessels arriving from foreign ports and investigated for violations of the revenue and navigation laws. He supervised the discharge of cargo and its disposition, examined baggage of arriving passengers, and he did his job so well that Customs officials began to take notice of this alert, intelligent young man, who so recently had entered the service.

Was it any wonder then that when the World War began Gregory O'Keefe was promoted to Assistant Chief of the newly formed Customs Intelligence Bureau? This placed him in direct charge of some five hundred government Intelligence Officers. Edward R. Norword, now Customs Agent in charge of Smuggling Investigations was the chief. The C. I. B. coöperated fully with the Military Intelligence, British Intelligence, and the Naval Intelligence.

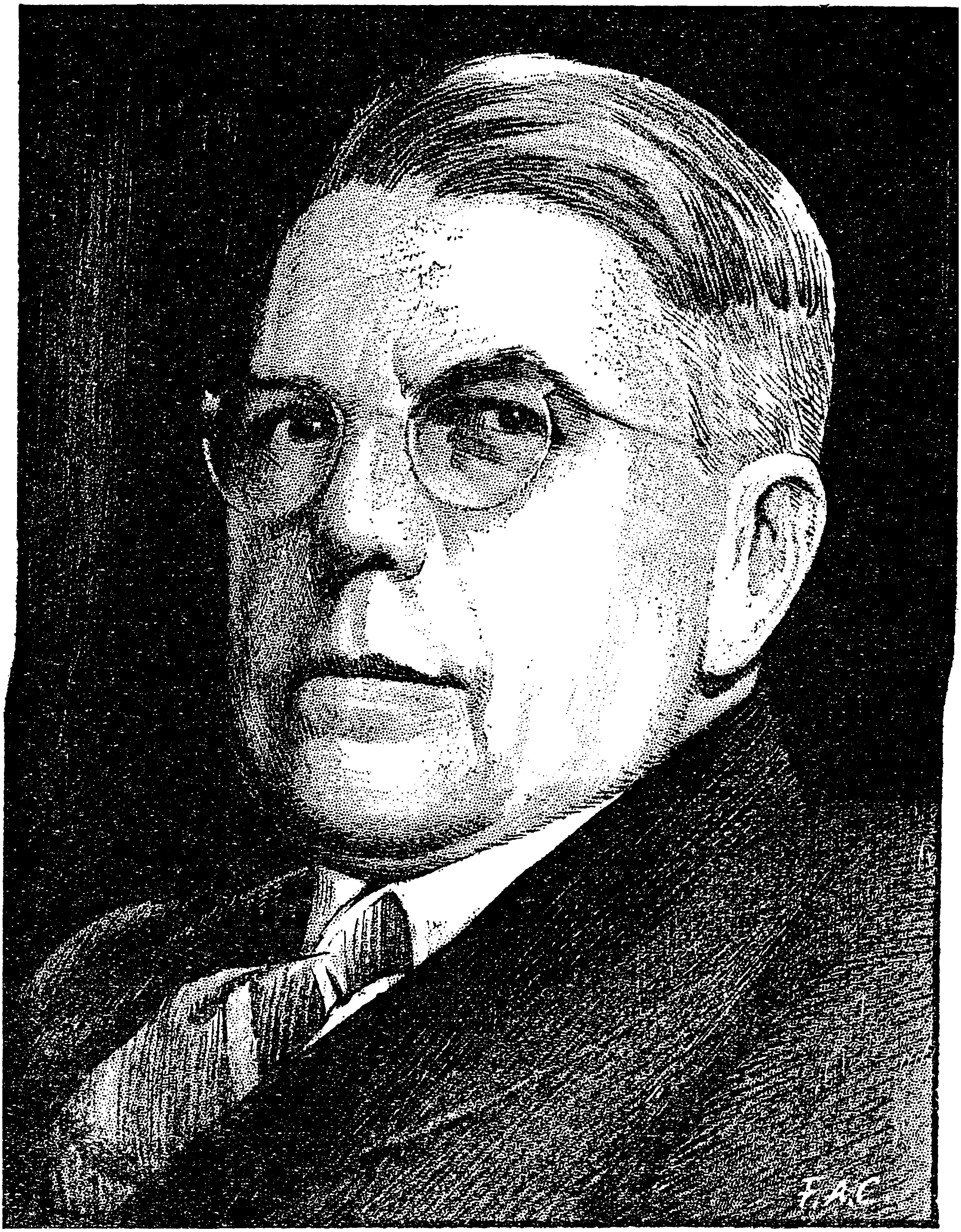
ENTRANCE of the United States into the World War increased and intensified the duties and responsibilities of Gregory O'Keefe. To aid in winning the War became his primary objective in life. He saw to it that laws were enforced regarding neutrality, and that interned enemy ships were seized. Under his guidance the Customs Intelligence Bureau became one of the most efficient units of its kind.

A horrible war was raging in Europe, but another war, more subtle, perhaps, but none the less deadly, was taking place along the American coast line. Espionage, vessel searching, baggage, passports; all these things had to be watched for and checked carefully. When plans of the seized ship "Vaterland" (later U. S. S. "Leviathan") disappeared, it meant months before new plans could be drawn up. And time was a serious element. The ship was needed for immediate transportation of American troops to France. O'Keefe was called in and ordered to get those plans. In a surprisingly short time the plans were recovered and turned over to the Naval Department.

What O'Keefe did, the responsibilities that were heaped upon his already overladen shoulders, would fill volumes. Suffice to state that during the whole War period, not a single severe outrage was connected with the New York waterfront or its adjacent waters. That record speaks for itself and for the ability of Gregory O'Keefe.

MR. O'KEEFE was appointed Customs Special Agent on June 5, 1925. His duties now were prevention and detection of frauds on the Customs revenue and all matters involving such frauds requiring investigation; investigation and report upon all matters brought to attention by Commissioner of Customs, Collectors, Appraisers, Surveyors and others, relating to undervaluation, smuggling, dumping, Customs procedure, and any other Customs matter. Lack of space prevents a detailed description of the fine work done by Special Agent O'Keefe. For this reason we will go quickly into the heart of a biography whose very authenticity is so startling as to read like something out of a novel.

On June 6, 1933, Gregory O'Keefe became Supervising Custom Agent for the second Customs Agency District (which embraces the States of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware). While chief of this Division, he was instrumental in breaking up numerous gangs of rum-runners, dope-smugglers, dia-



GREGORY W. O'KEEFE, Assistant Collector of Customs, Port of New York

mond-smugglers, and others who thought they could take a whack at Uncle Sam and get away with it.

Narcotics! Here was the white peril that O'Keefe fought tooth and nail. Take as an instance the pink-pill situation: These pills are a drug with Heroin as a base. Each pill contains Heroin, strychnine, codine, and coloring matter. It is possible to sell them cheaply while reaping a huge profit. Because of this the deadly drug is accessible to all. They are easily smuggled and (unlike opium) are without odor when smoked. They may be smoked in an ordinary tobacco pipe.

When the tip was received that an attempt would be made to smuggle in a large quantity of Heroin to be used in the manufacture of pink pills, Gregory O'Keefe issued strict orders that all customs officers be constantly alert for its arrival. Under no circumstances must this soul-destroying drug get through. He was especially adamant in his order that Customs Inspectors search carefully for false compartments in passengers' baggage.

The inspector who examined the baggage of the S. S. *Heiyo Maru* undoubtedly had O'Keefe's orders in mind. He turned to size up his passenger and beheld a pretty half-Chinese girl. Upon close examination, he discovered that one of her trunks had a false back, fitted in snugly behind the drawers. The inspector made a hole through the partition and white powder poured out. A second trunk disclosed a similar false back, containing more of the stuff. Later analysis proved the white powder to be deadly Heroin of some $200,000 value!

The innocent-looking girl was held and placed under guard in a Los Angeles hotel. She escaped by entering a bathroom, supposedly to bathe, only to effect a hurried exit through the next-door room. The tiny Chinese smuggler had vanished.

Word was flashed to New York. Gregory O'Keefe got on the job. All outgoing passengers were closely scrutinized by the intense eyes of Customs Agents. The pretty Chinese girl with the satiny yellow skin, was intercepted as she attempted to board a ship bound for Europe. Gregory O'Keefe saw to it that she was escorted safely back to Los Angeles. The girl was in deathly fear of being deported to China. She sighed with relief when a Federal judge sentenced her to twenty years imprisonment.

When the S. S. *Taybank* sailed out of Shanghai, foreign agents flashed the word that she was suspected of having narcotics aboard. When she would put into port was something they did know. Gregory O'Keefe taking no chances, had his agents on a twenty-four hour shift. Thus it was that they were on hand when the ship slipped into its berth in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn.

Customs Agents, acting under O'Keefe's orders, dressed themselves as longshoremen, and stood by for something to break. The break wasn't long in coming. A man was seen approaching the pier who was immediately recognized as a dope peddler. He was apprehended and taken into their pier office. There he was stripped of his clothing, which was immediately donned by a Customs Agent. The agent started for the ship, feeling certain that this man was in some way connected with the smugglers on board.

On his way up the gangplank, the agent put his hand into the coat pocket and drew out a scrap of paper, which had Chinese characters written on it. It was soiled, crumpled, and appeared to have been torn from a larger piece.

As the agent stepped on board the *Taybank*, he was accosted by a Chinese sailor. Taken unawares, the Customs man could not think of a ready explanation for his presence. Then he remembered the scrap of paper and pushed it into the hand of the Chinaman. The sailor took a quick glance, and his yellow face lighted up. He surprised the agent by reaching inside his shirt and bringing out a similar piece of paper. The two scraps of paper matched perfectly in the manner of a laundry ticket.

The Chinaman turned and quickly led the Customs Agent to a pile of burlap bags hidden in a secret place in the ship's hold. A prearranged signal was given, and the other agents rushed on board. When the burlap bags were opened, they were found to contain some $500,000 worth of prepared smoking opium! Again, Supervising Agent Gregory O'Keefe, Agents Roberts, Flynn and Collins had struck a mighty blow against the drug traffic.

THE recent crushing of a million-dollar diamond smuggling ring was front-page news for days. A large family group was involved in this gigantic smuggling scheme. Customs Agents worked on the case for weeks, determined that when they finally did strike the whole gang would be taken. Suspected members were shadowed day and night. Poor relatives, living in cheap apartments, were discovered to have made many expensive trips to Europe. The Customs men were convinced they had been used by the ring as carriers of contraband diamonds.

More intensive investigation followed. The Diamond Club was closely watched for the appearance of suspected members of the smuggling clique. All facts and figures pertaining to suspected persons were carefully checked. Cabled orders to Antwerp were noted to see if consignments came through legally as ordered. When they did not, it was a certainty that such consignments were being smuggled in.

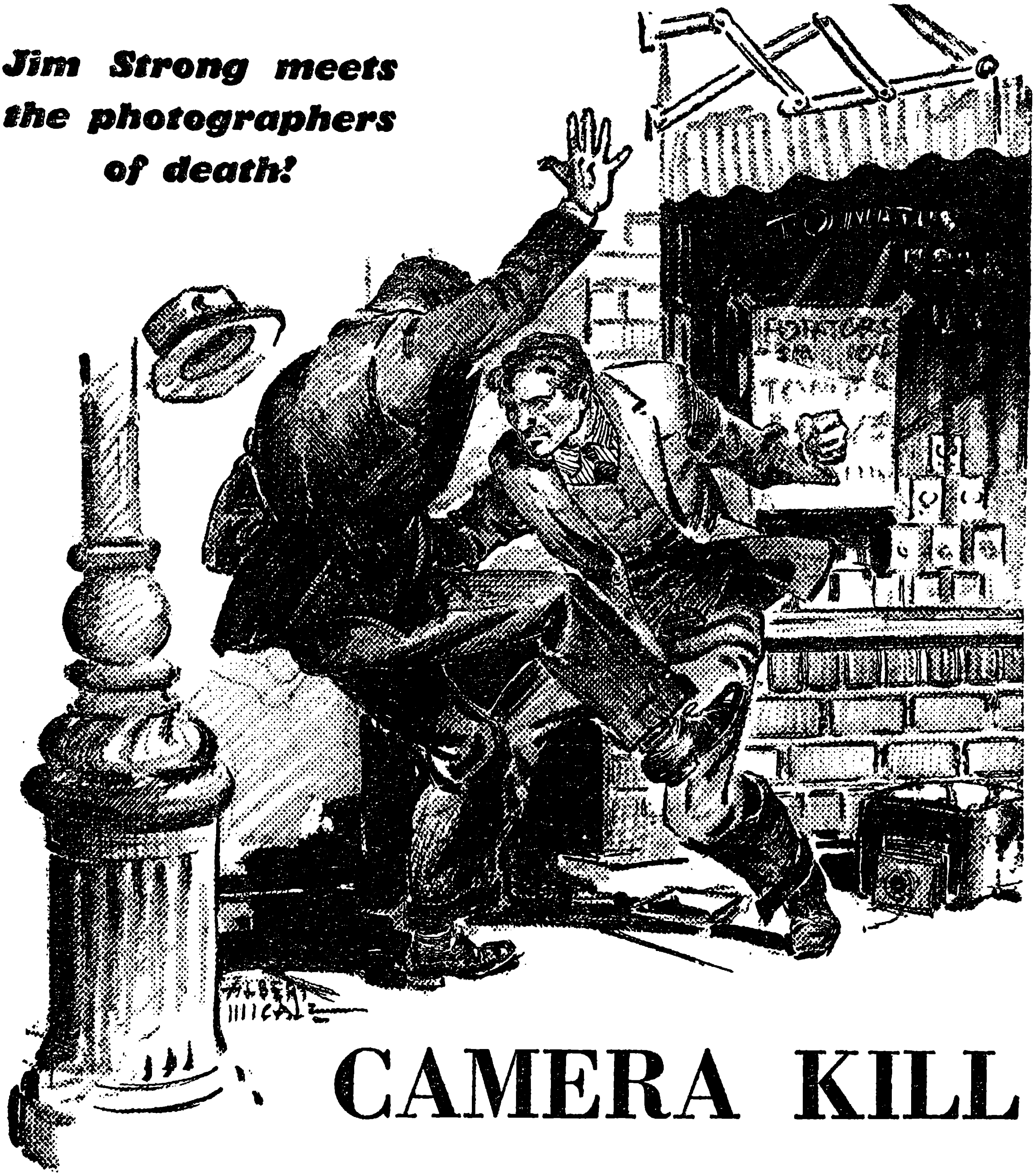
American buyers in foreign diamond marts were under constant surveillance. At the proper moment, the Customs struck. It was a smashing blow, most of the gang being taken in that first grand swoop.

To top this off, an important member of the gang, upon landing in New York, was greeted by Customs Agents. False compartments were found in the baggage, from which poured out a fortune in blue-white stones. A total weight of 4,000 karats was the amount seized, with a wholesale value of approximately $286,000. The diamonds had been purchased in Antwerp for about $238,000. The profit here would have been some $48,000, plus the saving in customs duties, if Uncle Sam's watchdogs, under such excellent leadership as that of Gregory O'Keefe and John Roberts, had not been on hand to intercept the smugglers.

When the British freighter *Maron* slipped into port with a Chinese crew aboard, Gregory O'Keefe thought it worth investigating. As he was about to leave the Custom House, the phone rang and a man on the other end identified himself as the master of the *Maron*. He was an honest captain and wished to report that he suspected some of his Chinese crew of being involved in a smuggling plot.

O'Keefe dropped the phone, and got to the pier in double quick time. The cargo was checked against the manifests, which disclosed the fact that eleven bags on board could not be accounted for. The bags were ripped open and their contents emptied upon the deck. Gregory O'Keefe's eyes widened, and for a good reason. At his feet lay six hundred one-half pound tins of smoking opium! Enough dope here

(Continued on page 128)



Jim Strong meets the photographers of death!

CAMERA KILL

By Frank Gruber

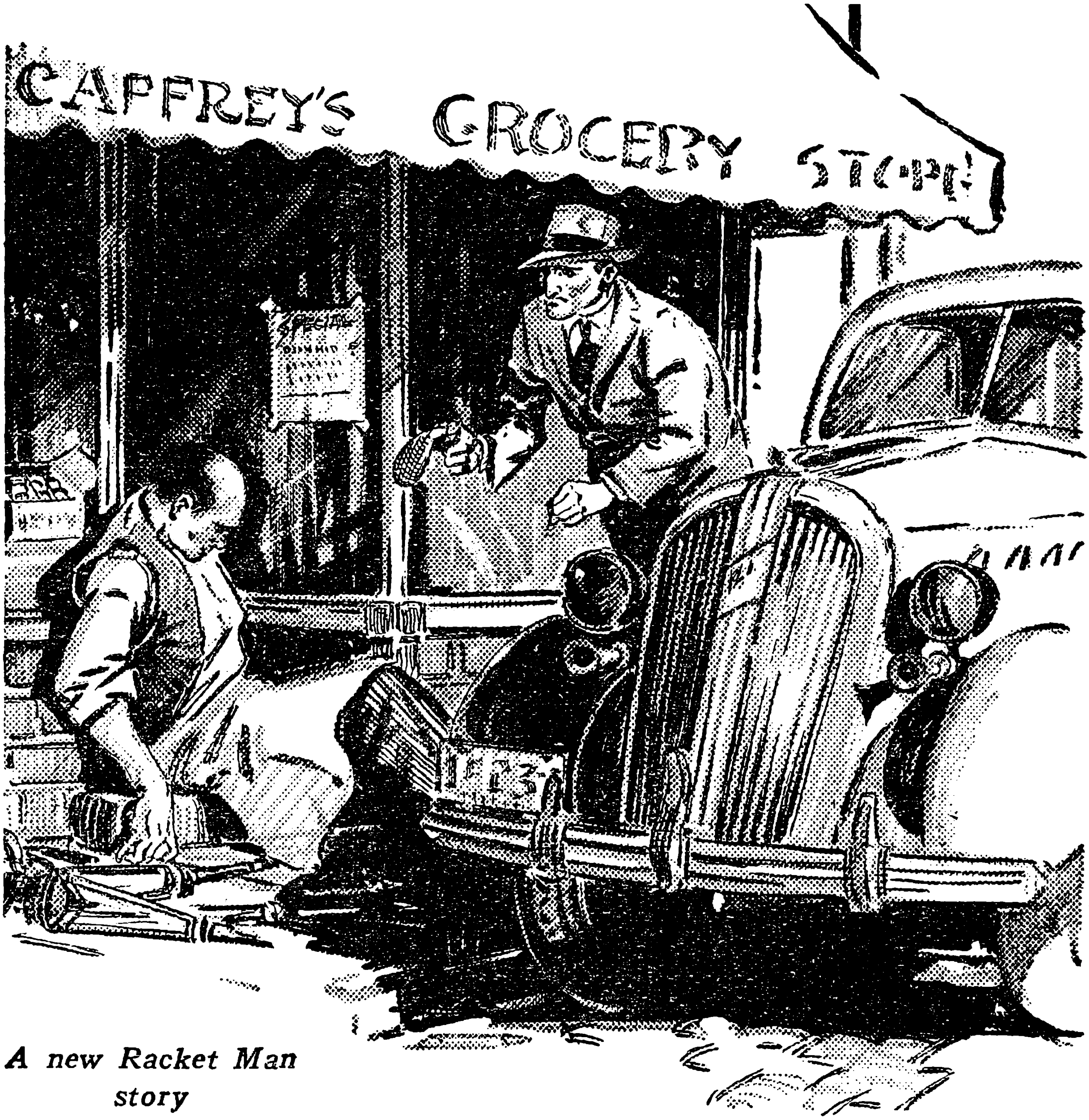
CHAPTER I.

DEATH RACKET.

JIM STRONG turned into Ben Caffrey's grocery store on Halsted Street to buy a package of cigarettes. They were one cent cheaper here than in the cigar stores. Jim Strong was an honest cop. He lived on his salary, spent much of it on charity. So he economized on the little things.

"Hello, sergeant," Ben Caffrey greeted him pleasantly. "The usual?"

Strong nodded and the grocer turned to reach for the cigarettes.



A new Racket Man story

Then he stopped. Strong saw his face scowl. He turned toward the door. A hawk-faced man of about thirty-five, with an incredibly long nose, had entered the store.

"All right, Mr. Caffrey," the arrival said cheerfully, "we're ready to take them pictures. Just step outside and we'll snap you."

Ben Caffrey shook his head. "Naw, I don't want them. I told you yesterday."

"Yeah, sure," said the long-nosed man. "But then we was talking about money yesterday. Me and Joe talked it over with the boss and he said seeing's you could help us advertise in this neighborhood, he'd let you have these free. On account of that trouble with the others. Ain't that fair?"

"I dunno," said Ben Caffrey. "Far's I'm concerned, I don't need the pictures. Let's forget about them."

"Long-nose" looked indignant. "What's the matter with you, Mr. Caffrey? Gone high hat or somethin'? I said the pictures was free. I mean it. They won't cost you a cent, the whole dozen of them. C'mon, step outside. It'll take just a minute to shoot you."

Ben Caffrey turned to reach for Jim Strong's cigarettes and, with his fingers on them, shrugged and walked toward the front of the store, behind the counter. "Wait just a minute, Mr. Strong, will you?" he called back.

Strong was annoyed. Even though he often worked late at the office and was a privileged character, he didn't like to get to the office too late in the morning. But he liked Ben Caffrey. So he leaned against the counter.

Caffrey went outside. Strong watched him take up a pose in front of the door. Long-nose's partner had a box camera already set up on a tripod. He squinted into the range-finder, looked up at Ben Caffrey and smiled.

Smoke burst from the lens of the camera; smoke and a sharp explosion. Strong blinked twice. Then he gasped and made an instinctive leap toward the door of the store. His hand was on the knob and he was tearing it open when he saw Ben Caffrey's face. The grocer had turned and was staring at Jim Strong, staring at him while blood streamed from his face.

Strong sprang through the door. Ben Caffrey was bending forward. His body lurched against Jim Strong. Strong caught it and lowered it quickly to the door stoop. Then he turned toward the cameraman and his long-nosed partner.

The latter was backing to a black sedan at the curb. The cameraman, however, was trying to dismount his camera from the tripod.

STRONG'S teeth parted into a snarl and he launched himself at the cameraman. The photographer was still struggling with his camera. But he saw Strong hurtling down on him and yelped. At the same time, he jerked back on the top part of the outfit. As a result, the tripod shot out and struck Strong.

Had the man taken the time to completely lift the tripod, Strong would have impaled himself on the sharp points. As it was, he smashed against the thing, stumbled and took the tripod and camera with him to the sidewalk. Even as he fell, he heard the cracking of wood and knew that the tripod legs were broken.

The breaking of the outfit angered the photographer. He cursed luridly and swung at Strong with his fist. Strong, by then, was already on his knees, getting up. The blow landed grazingly on his chin and he rolled with it. Then he came to his feet, swinging.

Strong's right collided with the photographer's mid-section and he felt keen satisfaction as the man went back, gasping. He followed through with a left to the chin, took a weak blow along the side of his face in return, and crossed with a sizzling right.

The fist exploded on the photographer's jaw and he reeled back. Strong leaped forward to land a finishing punch. He didn't get a chance to land it. During his fight with the photographer, he had completely ignored Long-nose, who had fled at his first chance. The man hadn't gone far. He couldn't—not with his pal in danger. Whether he wanted to or not, he had to come back and get into the fight. And he was in it suddenly with vim—and a blackjack.

The first Strong knew about it was when the blackjack exploded on the back of his head. Pain streaked through his body and he stumbled to his knees. He half turned and countered with his fists. The blackjack crashed down a second time, hit his left arm and numbed it instantly.

Strong saw the blackjack coming down a third time, made a desperate effort to dodge it and didn't quite succeed. He knew the blackjack landed on his head; knew that he was flat on the sidewalk then and that black unconsciousness was hovering over him. But there wasn't a thing he could do about it.

IT might have been ten seconds and it might have been ten minutes, before Jim Strong became suddenly conscious. He sat up and looked around a fringe of apprehensive faces.

"They get away?" he asked sharply.

No one answered him. The black car was gone from the curb, though. So was the lethal camera and the broken tripod. Strong couldn't see the body of Ben Caffrey. It was concealed by the rapidly growing circle around him.

Angrily, Strong climbed to his feet. And then a blue-coated policeman pushed through the circle of men and women. "What's going on here?" he demanded truculently.

"Murder," replied Strong.

"Oh, yeah?" said the policeman. His hand went to his hip pocket. Quickly, Strong flashed his shield. "Sergeant Strong of the D. A.'s office," he said. A murmur ran through the people gathered around.

"Call your precinct station," Strong told the policeman. "I've got to get down to the office. I'll make a report on this to the D. A., and call your captain."

The patrolman saluted Strong. "Okay, sergeant. I'll handle things here."

Impatiently, Strong pushed out through the crowd to the door of Ben Caffrey's store. He had seen Caffrey's face as the grocer collapsed against him. He had been pretty sure what that meant, but he wanted to see again.

It was a gruesome sight, but Strong steeled himself to make a close examination. When he rose, his lips were tight and bunches of hard muscles showed at his jaws. He muttered as he circled the knot of people in front of the store.

He strode swiftly to the corner of North Avenue and climbed into a parked cab. He gave the driver terse instructions, then leaned back in the leather-cushioned seat. The scowl did not leave his face all the way downtown.

THE clerk in the reception room grinned at Strong when he came in. It wasn't until then that Strong looked down at his clothing and realized the sidewalk of Halsted Street had been pretty dirty. He had neglected to brush himself off.

He continued through to his own private office, a room so small there was space only for a desk, a swivel chair, a coat rack and a straight-backed chair for callers.

Strong got a brush from a drawer of his desk and swept himself vigorously. He was putting the brush back into the desk when the reception clerk stuck his head into Strong's office. "Mr. Murdock wants to see you, sergeant!" he announced.

Strong nodded. He was just going to report to the D. A., anyway. Murdock was a short, wiry man with incredible energy. He was the sixth D. A. under whom Sergeant Jim Strong had served. Most of the personnel in the department changed with the various administrations. Strong was the only man who remained through the changes. That was because retiring D. A.'s always said to their successors, "If you're determined to have an economy administration, lay off twenty or thirty men—but keep Jim Strong. That man can smell a racket a mile away. He'll make your job an easy one."

Murdock, a brittle, short-tempered man, was one of Strong's staunchest supporters. But he never quite forgot that he had once been a highly successful criminal lawyer. "Well, Strong, spill it," he said. "I got the call ten minutes ago."

"About Caffrey, the grocer on Halsted Street?"

"What else?" asked the D. A. sarcastically. "You tried tackling a couple of tough eggs and got conked, eh? You didn't have your gun with you, I suppose?"

"I seldom carry one," Strong defended. "You know my work is mostly with swindlers and confidence men."

"All potential murderers—but go on, keep me in the dark. I'm only the district attorney. Cap Kennard phoned and said his man had reported a screwy bump-off. How screwy?"

"Plenty," said Strong. "I was in this grocery store getting a package of cigarettes. These two men came up with a camera to take Caffrey's picture. They got him to pose in front of the store and—*wham!*—the camera shot him with a bullet!"

"Eh? The camera shot him?"

STRONG nodded. "It wasn't a real camera. Well—it might have been a regular camera case, but it was doctored, with a gun inside to shoot through the lens when the shutter was snapped. I tried to get the camera, and the two men, and I got worked over with a blackjack. That's about all there was to it."

"All?" cried Murdock. "What do you mean, all? Why should those murderers want to kill Caffrey with a camera? Why didn't they just shoot him with a regular gun?"

"Because these men were working the old photography racket on Caffrey. Evidently—I gathered that from their talk—he was resisting them. Had probably threatened to report them to the police. So they rigged up that camera. That's all clear enough. The thing to do now is to find out who's been working the old photography racket. I have a hunch Cliff Sweetser is out again. I sent him up seven years ago."

"Another of your fancy rackets, huh?" snorted the D. A. "Well, I'm not up on them. What's this one like—this photography racket?"

Strong's forehead wrinkled. "Cliff Sweetser called his outfit the Consolidated News Pictures Association. His men would go around to folks who wouldn't ordinarily buy photographs and intimate the Consolidated News Pictures Association was similar to the big news associations. They'd tell the prospective victim they wanted a picture of him—or his store—for a news release, for a news reel about his industry or profession. Something like that. There's a streak of vanity in all of us and these folks would gladly pose. Then, lo and behold, two or three days later a couple of men would call to deliver a dozen 'portraits,' usually framed. They'd have with them a bill for an outrageous sum.

"Of course the victim would howl and say he hadn't ordered the photographs. Then the 'salesmen' would show him the signed order. Of course the victim had signed it. He'd been told by the photographer that it was merely a formal release—permission to use the photograph for advertising and news purposes. He probably hadn't read what he'd signed, or the printing above the signature line was cleverly covered up with a half sheet of 'release' matter."

"And the suckers paid?" snapped the D. A. "They *were* suckers."

"Perhaps. But you mustn't forget that these men who brought the finished pictures—and the bill—came in pairs and were very tough-looking men. A hint of what would happen to them if they refused to pay was usually enough. Not for Ben Caffrey, though. So they killed him."

"And all you have to do now is gather in this Cliff Sweetser? Which just goes to show you how simple these murder solutions usually are." The D. A.'s words dripped with sarcasm. "Well, if it's that simple, what're you waiting for? Go out and get this Sweetser!"

"Seven years ago," said Strong, "Sweetser was a thin, clean-shaven man. Today he may be fat and wear a beard. He may have changed his name to Smith or Dreibelbiss. In fact, Sweetser may not have a thing to do with this at all."

The D. A. howled. "Don't bother me with petty details. Go out and get your man, whatever he looks like or whatever his name may be."

Strong started toward the door, and then the D. A. grinned. "I'll bet you bring him in in record time, too. Before we clear up the other Halsted Street matter."

CHAPTER II.

SALESMEN OF DEATH.

STRONG went back to his office. He took out a small key and stepped to a door on the far side of his little office. He unlocked it, reached inside and switched on a light.

A smile played on his face as he stepped into the little room. This was his "gadget room." In it were the results of his twelve years in the district attorney's office. Everything in this room had at one time or another figured in a swindle or racket of some sort.

Shelves were heaped high with a weird assortment of mechanical contrivances. There were perpetual-motion machines, office and labor-saving devices, kitchen utensils, patented articles of all descriptions and supposed to cover almost every type of use.

One shelf was piled high with stocks, bonds, shares in oil wells, gold mines and blue sky. All had been used in some fraud or swindle. And so they had come to Jim Strong's gadget room.

Strong was always at his best in this room. He handled objects with affection; memory of some brought smiles to his face; others—frowns. Those had particularly nasty associations.

He rummaged about for a few minutes and finally dug up a Graflex camera, a good one. Strong gave Sweetser credit; the portraits he had made in the old days had been good ones. There was a large Manila envelope with the camera. Strong opened it and examined the contents. There were several glossy photographs, some letterheads, a few bills. Strong nodded in satisfaction and put the stuff away again.

He spent several minutes more in the room, handling various objects. Then he came out of the room and locked the door. He stepped out to the reception room and said to the clerk: "Have a car brought around. I've got some things to attend to."

Five minutes later, Jim Strong climbed into a small coupé, minus official insignia. He tooled the car in and out of traffic, heading westward. At Van Buren and Peoria, he turned south and after a moment pulled up to the curb.

He got out of the car and entered a dingy, run-down building. He scanned the building directory, nodded, then climbed up a rickety staircase to the third floor. The door he opened led him to a room acrid with the smell of chemicals.

Strong entered a small office and held up his hand in greeting to a fat, bald man. "Hello, Mr. Sommers," he said, "how's business?"

THE man called Sommers looked at Strong a moment, puzzled. Then recognition dawned on him and he smiled. "Sergeant Strong?" he said. "What brings you here?"

"Murder."

Sommers winced. "Another poison case?"

Strong shook his head. "Not this time. Just plain shooting—with a gun."

"Then how can I help?"

"Well, you're the largest wholesaler of prussic acid in the city, probably in the Middle West. Prussic acid figures indirectly in this particular case—— Do you remember Cliff Sweetser?"

"Sweetser?" mused Sommers. "Wasn't he the man you sent up several years ago on that photograph racket?"

"Yes, but he only got five years. He's been out for some time. I think he's operating again. That's why I came to you. In the old days, he developed his own negatives. He bought a lot of prussic acid from you."

"That's right. All photographers use prussic acid in their work. Sweetser was a big customer. But I'm sorry, sergeant. I haven't seen or heard of Sweetser since you sent him up."

"Probably not, under that name. But you've got your old books. Look through them and note down how much prussic acid he bought from you in a month. Then compare the amount with your new customers, those who've come to you in the last year or two."

"I'll be damned!" said Sommers. "I wouldn't have thought of approaching the subject like that. Wait—I'll see!"

The work took less than fifteen minutes. Then Sommers showed Strong three names, saying, "Here, look at these. You can strike out the Ajex, too. I happen to know the members of that firm personally. That leaves you the Martin Studio and the International Press Bureau."

"The International Press Bureau is my choice. Sweetser always went in for big-sounding names. Thanks, Mr. Sommers, and I'm sorry you're going to lose another customer."

"So am I," growled Sommers.

Strong was pleased with himself as he climbed into his car. He was breaking a murder case in record time. The D. A. would like that. Murdock would get his picture in the papers and issue bombastic statements to the press.

The address of the International Press Bureau was on north Western Avenue. Strong drove down Van Buren to Western Avenue, then turned north. He drove on Western for almost two miles, then finally parked his car before a two-story building. He grinned as he entered.

THERE was a girl at a small switchboard, an unusually attractive blonde.

"Mr. Wilberforce, the manager," Strong said.

"Sorry, but Mr. Wilberforce never sees anyone except by appointment. If you'll leave your name and state the nature of your business——"

Strong pushed through the little gate beside the switchboard. "Mr. Wilberforce has an appointment," he said, "with a judge!"

He strode quickly to a door on which was lettered in gold: "Justin P. Wilberforce, President." He pushed open the door.

"Hello, Cliff," he said to the man seated behind a mahogany desk.

"Cliff" looked at Strong and his face turned the color of overripe cheese. "Strong!" he gasped. "Jim Strong!"

"Yes," said Strong. "Me. Are you ready?"

"Ready for what?"

"The usual. Jail! And this time you won't be getting out so quick. Your last trip should have taught you a lesson."

"I don't know what you're talking about," blustered Cliff Sweetser. "I'm running a legitimate business here and——"

"Murder is never legitimate," said Strong.

Sweetser's eyes bulged. "Murder! What—what are you talking about?"

"A man with a long nose and a squat, chunky fellow. Know them? They were working your old racket on a grocer on Halsted Street. They killed him."

Sweetser looked as if he'd been stricken with apoplexy. "They—they *killed* a man!"

"You ought to know. They were working for you. What's the matter—wouldn't Caffrey come through? Or did he threaten to report you to the police?"

"Strong," said Sweetser, thickly, "I'll come clean. I *have* been selling pictures again. All right, I shouldn't. I'll take the rap for that. But murder—Lord, you know I never went in for that."

"I knew you used to be chicken-hearted," said Strong. "But I figured you'd changed in stir. Your kind sometimes does. Well, if you weren't behind it, what about those two men? The long-nosed one and the other?"

"I don't know them, Strong. Honest! They came in here yesterday, bought one of my old cameras for fifty dollars. That's all I know about them. I never saw them before in my life. I don't know if I'd know them again if they walked in here!"

"That's right, pal!" said a voice behind Strong. "You wouldn't know us."

STRONG started to whirl. And something hard and round slammed into his spine, was ground in so viciously Strong winced from the pain of it.

"Easy, copper!" grated a harsh voice. Rough hands patted Strong's clothing. He still didn't have his gun with him. "A cop without a rod," sneered the same rough voice.

"If I'd had one this morning, you wouldn't be here now," replied Strong.

The pressure was removed from Strong's spine. The two men, the long-nosed one and the killing cameraman came around in front of Strong.

"All right, copper!" sneered Longnose. "Talk now."

"About what?"

"About how the hell you got here?" snarled the cameraman. "We didn't leave no calling cards behind us."

"I'll handle it, Joe," said Longnose.

Joe subsided. The hawk-faced man gestured at Strong with the gun in his hand. "All right, how did you hear about our tie-up with Wilby here?"

"Wilberforce?" Strong grinned. "He's an old friend. I sent him up seven years ago. His real name's Sweetser. You can't teach an old dog new tricks. When I saw that photograph business this morning, I thought about Sweetser right away. I figured he was out, so came over here."

"And how'd you find out where he was? And his new name?"

Strong shrugged. "That's not important. The thing is——"

"Fire!" The yell came from the outer office. Strong saw the startled expression that came into the eyes of the three men in the room with with him. He tensed himself.

"Fire!" screamed the woman's voice in the next room. "Help—*fire!"*

Cliff Sweetser sprang up from his chair. The long-nosed man with the gun gestured toward his partner, Joe. The latter stepped quickly to the door, tore it open. There was no mistake about the fire. A cloud of black smoke rolled into the private office.

Long-nose exclaimed sharply. At that moment, Jim Strong acted. He had known what to expect; the others hadn't. He pivoted on his right heel, swinging his fist with all his 170 pounds behind it. The blow landed flush on the gunman's chin, sent him sprawling to one side. The gun flew from his hand, hit the wall and bounced back to the floor.

Strong plunged after it. Sweetser saw him going for the gun, bleated and came out from behind his desk with a rush. Strong's fingers actually touched the metal of the automatic. But they didn't close around it, for at the instant of contact Sweetser's foot collided with the gun and it was whisked out of Strong's clutch.

Strong cursed furiously. "I'll remember that, Sweetser!" he cried. He gathered himself together, to spring to his feet. Then Joe, the thick man, collided with him. Smoke was already pouring into the private office and the gunman was frantic to make his escape from the room, yet too frightened to attempt it through the curtain of black smoke in the outer office. He was trying to find another exit.

Strong got to his feet, looked around for someone to fight and suddenly discovered that he was the only man left in the room. Grinning crookedly, he leaped to the office door and slammed it shut. Then he scooped up a wastebasket and smashed it through a window. The smoke that had come into the private office began pouring out of the window.

Strong walked around to the swivel chair that Sweetser had vacated and calmly seated himself!

CHAPTER III.

THE RACKET KING.

HE heard the sirens of fire apparatus out on the street; he heard commotion and scuffling in the outer offices. Yet Strong remained seated. Until a couple of firemen suddenly burst into the room.

Strong looked past them into the outer office. Surprisingly, only a haze of smoke remained from the dense black cloud that had been in it before. "What's the matter boys?" he asked mildly.

"Where's the fire?" cried one of the firemen.

"Not in here," replied Strong. "You can see for yourself."

The blonde from the switchboard burst into the room. "That man—it happened right after he'd broken in here!"

"Yeah?" said one of the firemen. "Who're you?"

Strong got up. He displayed his

police badge. "D. A.'s office. Sorry, boys, to have you called out. But I thought I might need you to help me, so I dropped a little smoke cartridge in the outer office. A very special kind that took three minutes to go off."

"You're Jim Strong, the Racket Man, I'll bet!" snorted one of the firemen. "I've heard about those gadgets of yours. But say—what've happened if you'd wanted to stop that smoke cartridge?"

"I'd have dropped it in a glass of water and nothing would have happened. The man who invented that smoke cartridge blew out his brains four years ago. He was swindled out of his life's savings. I imagine he'd like to know that the cartridge helped to put the kibosh on some swindlers."

"What do you mean—swindlers?" cried the blonde switchboard operator.

Strong crooked a finger at the girl. "Come here, sister. I want to ask you a few questions. Mind, boys?"

"Naw, not a-tall." The firemen retreated.

"All right, Miss——" Strong began.

"Murphy, Elsie Murphy."

"How do you do, Miss Murphy. Tell me now, did you or did you not know that your employer was an ex-convict and that he was even now engaged in an illegitimate business?"

THE girl's expression was too genuine for Strong not to believe her. Strong sighed, "All right, then, those two photographers or salesmen—the long-nosed one and the one called Joe—what do you know about them?"

"I never saw them before yesterday," said Elsie Murphy. "They came in yesterday and talked to the boss, Mr. Wilberforce, and he hasn't been the same since."

"You mean they weren't employees of Wilberforce?"

"No. He's got eight or ten photographers and salesmen working for him. I know them all quite well. These two men weren't employees. If you ask me, I'd say they had the Indian sign on the boss about something."

"They did at that," said Strong. "Hmm, this puts a new light on things. Miss Murphy, will you look through your order file and see if your men took an order from a Ben Caffrey, of Halsted Street?"

The girl went into the outer office, rummaged through a filing cabinet and a moment later returned with a sheet of paper. "Yes, he ordered one dozen photographs, priced at thirty-six dollars. They were delivered yesterday morning."

"They weren't returned? There was no complaint about them?"

"Not that I know of. I would have heard of it. According to this, he paid for the photographs upon receipt of them. All our customers do. This is a strictly cash business."

"I'll bet it is," said Strong dryly. He scowled. The thing was growing more muddled right along. What had started out as a simple case of homicide with the promise of a quick solution, was rapidly developing into an incredible enigma. Twenty minutes ago, when he'd got the information about the prussic acid, he'd considered the case closed. All that had remained was to make the arrest. He'd felt confident of that. Would have been successful, too, except for the untimely intervention of Joe and Long-nose.

The firemen had gone. The smoke had cleared out of the offices. Strong said to the girl: "No use your hanging around here. Your boss is gone

—for good. If he comes back here, he'll be arrested."

"But what about my wages?"

"Lock the door and take the key down to Mr. Murdock, the district attorney. Tell him what happened here. Tell him Sergeant Strong sent you down. He'll probably send someone down here to take the books and any cash around. He'll see that you get your wages."

STRONG left the office of the photograph studio. Out on the street he hesitated uncertainly for a moment, finally calling to a passing taxi. He got in and said, "North Avenue and Halsted. And step on it. I'm a police officer."

"Oh, boy!" said the cab driver. Inside of a block, he had the gas pedal down on the floorboards. Strong had to make the man slow up after a minute or two; he was driving too recklessly.

He paid off the driver at the corner of North and Halsted, then walked swiftly to the scene of his Waterloo earlier in the day. The crowds were gone. Caffrey's grocery store was open, presided over by a youth of about twenty.

"Hello," Strong said. "Who're you?"

"David Thompson," replied the youth. "Ben Caffrey's brother-in-law. He—he got killed this morning."

"I know. I was here. I'm Sergeant Jim Strong of the district attorney's office."

Young Thompson's eyes widened. "Say, I've read about you in the papers. And Ben talked about you often."

"Where's Mrs. Caffrey?"

David Thompson frowned. "Why, she went over to our place. She—she's awfully upset by what happened."

"I know," said Strong. "It was pretty awful. I'm trying to get the men who did it. Ben lived back of the store here, didn't he?"

Thompson nodded. "There's three rooms in back."

Strong chewed at his lower lip. "Look, Dave, you've heard how Ben was killed, by a gun concealed in a camera. I think it had some connection with some photographs Ben had taken a few days ago. I—I want to see those photographs."

"Why, I know where they are. I saw them last night. I'll get one if you'll watch the store a minute."

"Get them all—all twelve!" said Strong.

David Thompson walked swiftly to a door at the rear of the store and went into another room.

IT was the slack time of the day. No customers came into the grocery store while Strong was watching it. Thompson returned after a minute or so with a sheaf of enlarged photographs. Strong took them from Thompson's hands. Eagerly, he scanned the first photograph.

It was a front view of Caffrey's grocery store. In the center stood Ben Caffrey, wearing a long white shop apron and a broad smile. A woman wheeling a baby carriage was in the left of the view; a man evidently coming out of the building next door, at the right.

Strong's forehead furrowed. The pictures were clear ones; Sweetser's photographers were good men. Strong wondered what the talk had been about that morning, between Caffrey and Long-nose. Evidently, there had been something wrong with the photographs—at least, Long-nose had intimated that. Caffrey himself had been inclined to be satisfied with them. Was there some angle about the transaction about which Strong was unaware?

Probably. Elsie Murphy had said the two thugs were not regular Sweetser men. She had never seen them until yesterday, and the photographs had been *delivered* yesterday. They had probably been taken a day or two before, perhaps longer; in which case, Long-nose and Joe could not have been concerned with them.

Strong shuffled the photographs. They were all prints from the same negative. He examined the reverse sides of them, studied the front view again. And then he gasped sharply.

"Your phone!" he cried. "Where is it?"

David Thompson pointed to a wall phone. Strong sprang to it, and a moment later cried: "Mr. Murdock, Strong speaking! This morning when I was talking to you . . . didn't you say something about *another* Halsted Street matter?"

"What the devil, Strong!" exclaimed the D. A. "Haven't you heard about it? It happened two days ago. It was straight homicide and the precinct men are working on it. They picked up Duke Bayard, but he had an airtight alibi and——"

"Duke Bayard!" cried Jim Strong. "Then it was the Vernie Collins rubout. I saw that in the papers. I wasn't unusually interested in it, so didn't even notice where the killing took place. You say Halsted Street?"

"Yes . . . only about four doors from your murder. But Strong, what's up? You got something?"

"Yes! That killing ties in with this one. Have Bayard arrested at once. Issue a general alarm for him. Get . . ."

"You're sure, Jim? You'd better be; one of Bayard's alibi witnesses was an alderman. Bayard's got friends. He claims he was on a hunting trip up in northern Wisconsin when Collins was killed. The alderman claims to have been with him."

"When I bring in what I've got," said Strong, "Bayard's alderman friend will go on a hunting trip to Tibet. . . . See you, later!" Abruptly he hung up the receiver.

DAVID THOMPSON was staring at Strong, awe in his eyes. "Duke Bayard!" he said. "You got something on *him?*"

Strong took one of Ben Caffrey's photographs and rolled it up. "Dave," he said, "put these photographs away somewhere. Don't give them to anyone. Hide them. Stick them in a flour barrel or something. I'll be calling for them in a day or two. I'm taking only one with me."

He stuck the rolled-up photograph into his coat pocket and stepped to the door. He opened it and window glass behind him shattered and crashed to the sidewalk. Strong heard the blast of a gun, saw the black sedan across the street and made a frantic leap backward.

Something struck his thigh three inches above the knee, seared through it. Strong's leg buckled under him and he pitched to the stoop in front of the store door.

He saw the two men running across the street toward him, saw the guns in their hands and knew that the game was up. The men were Long-nose and Joe. Behind them, across the street, Strong saw Cliff Sweetser behind the wheel of the black sedan.

"Too bad the bullet went so low," cried Long-nose as he brandished his gun before Strong.

Strong gritted his teeth and reached out suddenly with his hands. He caught hold of Long-nose's ankle and jerked viciously on it. The gunman yelped and slashed down on Strong with his gun. The Racket Man took the blow on his shoulder, but it didn't prevent him from pulling the man down on top of him.

Joe, the thick man, who had worked the camera-gun earlier in the day, was much the stronger of the two hoods physically. He went to his pal's rescue and clouted Strong viciously on the right temple with his gun. Strong didn't go out, but he had to fight the sudden nausea that swooped over him.

Before he came out of it, the two men were half dragging, half carrying him across the street. They threw him into the tonneau of the sedan and climbed in after him. "Step on it!" one of them cried to Cliff Sweetser.

Sweetser did. The car rushed north, turned right at Willow Street, left again at Burling. Left at Armitage. And five minutes later it pulled up in an alley. The three men hustled Strong out of the car and into the back entrance of a two-story house. They dragged him up a stairway. A moment later they shoved him into a flat.

A beetle-browed man of about forty grinned icily. Strong had seen the man's face before, in dozens of newspaper articles. He was "Duke" Bayard, one time prohibition beer lord, turned racketeer since repeal.

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE THINGS COUNT.

"What kinda fish you got here, Nosey?" Bayard asked.

"The famous Jim Strong," replied "Nosey," sarcastically. "The guy that butt into our business this morning."

"So you were hunting with the alderman, Bayard?" said Strong. "And on the same day Ben Caffrey got his picture taken by Cliff's boys here. You were coming out of the building next to Caffrey's store at the moment and got into the picture. An accident, yes, but it broke your alderman alibi. There were too many witnesses—honest ones, who can testify to the exact time Caffrey had that picture taken. Caffrey himself, for one. So you got together with Cliff——"

"No, no!" cut in Sweetser.

"Shut up, you chicken-livered coward!" snapped Duke Bayard. "All right, Strong, you got it figured out. So we muscled in on this crook's business, sorta took it over. Unfortunately, we didn't locate him until after his yeggs had delivered the pictures to Caffrey. That made it a little tougher. Caffrey already had been stung on those pictures and didn't want anything more to do with picture men."

"So you killed him!"

"And what do you think's going to happen to you, Mister Strong?" Duke grinned.

Strong had been dropped to the floor when brought in. His leg wound was bleeding slightly, but not paining him much. Shock, more than anything else, had knocked the leg out from under him in front of Caffrey's store. But he remained sitting on the floor, to give the impression of severity in his wound.

"I don't know, Bayard," he said. "What was it you used to do to the boys? Put their feet in a tub of cement and tow them out to the lake?"

"I've helped the cement industry a bit," retorted Bayard. "But I sold my boat during the depression. I've got better ways now of getting rid of mugs who poke their noses into my business."

"I'll bet you have, Bayard; but before you go into the matter, why not ask Nosey here if he saw me using the telephone in Caffrey's store before they started shooting at me?"

Duke Bayard's eyes narrowed. "What's this, Nosey?"

Nosey was disconcerted. "Yeah, we was watching from across the street. He—he did use the phone!"

"I was talking to Mr. Murdock, the D. A.," said Strong quietly.

Duke Bayard swore lustily. "He—he knows about me?"

"Uh-huh; and by now every cop in the city is looking for you, Duke. Your alderman friend is probably packing his luggage and calling up the railroad depots about trains to far-away points."

Duke Bayard stormed about the room, raging. "Why didn't you keep him from telephoning? You were following him all morning. Why'd you let him get to a phone?"

"Aw, this is Jim Strong," Nosey defended himself. "You've heard about the stunts he pulls. Hell—I figure we did good to get him at all. We had him once at Sweetser's joint and all of a sudden the place was on fire, and the fire department was there. What could we do? We hadda scram."

"Why not just let him have it and beat it?" asked Joe, the rod man.

DUKE BAYARD looked at Joe, then at Strong. "No," he said. "There's a fighting chance to beat the other rap. The picture doesn't show me up any too clearly. I *might,* with time, get someone who looks something like me to admit that he was on Halsted Street about that time."

"Hey!" cried Nosey. "That's for you. Yeah, but you forget there was fifty witnesses this morning who saw Joe and me. *You* might beat the other rap, but what about Joe and me? Huh?"

"He'll throw you to the wolves," said Strong quickly.

Duke Bayard aimed a kick at Jim Strong, which the latter dodged. "You know I wouldn't forget you," the racketeer said placatingly. "We got to figure out something else—— I've got it. We'll pile this wise copper into the bus with us. We'll hold a rod on him and if any other cops try to stop us—we'll convince 'em that something will happen to the D. A.'s pet if they don't back up right away."

Strong's eyes narrowed. Duke Bayard's plan was so fundamentally simple it might work. Bayard might get through the cordon that was no doubt thrown around the city by now. He might get through it even without Strong. With him, he'd probably make it. And once out of the city, his chances for making a clean get-away were good. He knew he was through in the city, anyway.

The others seemed to like Bayard's plan. Except Cliff Sweetser. "What about me?" he whined. "I wasn't in on any killings."

"Try and prove it," retorted Bayard. "Far's I'm concerned, you can stay here——"

"Nix," said Nosey quickly. "The punk's so yellow he'd run to the cops right away. We'll take him along—until we get out of town." He winked.

THE preparations for flight were simple. Duke Bayard went into another room and after a moment returned with a small leather bag. He patted it. Strong knew that it contained the racketeer's boodle. "Let's go," said Bayard.

Nosey and Joe each caught hold of one of Strong's arms and yanked him to his feet. Strong put his weight on his injured leg and sank again. "C'mon!" cried Nosey roughly. He pulled on Strong.

They had to almost carry Strong down the stairs again. Out in the alley, Bayard instructed Joe to drive the car. They shoved Strong into the seat beside the driver. He stumbled over the running board, and Nosey smashed him along the side of the head with his fist. Nosey, Bayard and Sweetser climbed into the rear.

The car rolled out of the alley, on to Armitage. Joe drove eastward toward the park. Near Clark Street, the traffic became thick. Joe watched the traffic lights and made a quick left turn into Clark Street. The tires screeched.

Jim Strong let out his pent-up breath. There was a small sigh with the exhalation. His eyes lit up, though, as he looked ahead two blocks, to Webster, where there was an entry to the park's drives, which in turn led to the express drive, the fastest way out of the city.

The light at Webster was green and Joe made a sharp right turn into the park. Again Strong sighed.

"Hey!" exclaimed Nosey, in back. "Lookit all the cops!"

"Shut up, Nosey," ordered Duke Bayard. "Those are Lincoln Park cops. That's their headquarters over there. Take it easy, Joe, until we get past them."

Joe took his foot off the accelerator until the car rolled an idle twenty-five. Ahead was a left turn. Joe started to make it, and then Strong suddenly screamed: *"Look out!"*

There was traffic on the cross drive. At Strong's yelp, Joe instinctively slammed on the brakes, at the same time cutting his wheel to the left. The car's brakes screeched and there was a sharp *pop!*

Only one thing in the world made a noise like that. A blowout. For one horrified moment, everyone in the car sat still. Cars were stopping on the right and on the left.

JIM STRONG moved, swiftly and desperately. It was his one chance—his last chance. He tore open the door at his side and was half out of the car before Nosey, beside him, did anything. Nosey cried out and clawed at Strong. His fingers caught hold of Strong's coat tail. Strong was moving fast, and the coat ripped.

It was enough, though, to slow up Strong for an instant. And then Duke Bayard and Joe were in it. They were so excited and desperate, they fell against one another. That, partly, saved Strong from really being injured.

Duke Bayard smashed at his head with his gun. The blow only scraped the side of Strong's face and landed on his shoulder. It drove him to his knees, outside the car. He purposely threw himself forward on his hands, rolled over.

He caught a fleeting glimpse of the three men piling out of the car, and then he was compelled to make the most heroic defense of his life he'd ever been called upon to perform. The three men kicked with their feet, smashed down on him with their fists. And Duke Bayard with his gun. He swung it again and again.

Strong fought back. He had to. He fought as viciously as did the three desperate, thwarted crooks. He sent Nosey back, sobbing from a savage blow in the stomach. He butted Joe in the face with his head and felt the warm blood spurt upon him.

He heard the din of automobile horns all around him, the yelling of people. But they couldn't help him. He was alone with these three savage killers, fighting a losing battle.

He dodged a blow of Bayard's gun, tripped against Joe and crashed backward to the ground. He saw Duke throwing down his gun on him and knew that it was all over.

He heard the sharp explosion of a gun, winced—and it was a moment before he realized that the bullet had not slammed into his body. In fact, Duke Bayard was falling, falling down upon Jim Strong. Strong threw up his hands and caught the killer.

And suddenly there were more than a dozen policemen around Strong. He saw Nosey and Joe being handcuffed together. A man plucked Bayard's gun from his limp hand, rolled him off Jim Strong. "All right, buddy, it's all over."

Strong climbed to his feet. He was giddy from the beating he had taken. He looked down at Bayard. The killer's eyes were open, but he was breathing hoarsely. Strong doubted if he would ever sit down in the electric chair.

"Lucky—stiff!" gasped Bayard. "If that—tire hadn't blown out—— Fool luck!"

"That wasn't luck, Bayard," Strong said calmly. "When you fellows shoved me into the car and I stumbled on the running board, I stuck a little gadget with six very sharp points into the tire. I figured the first time Joe slammed on the brakes, the points would cut through to the inner tube. Drivers usually slam on the brakes at intersections, and there's cops at most of them. Without a car, I didn't think you'd try any bluff on them."

Duke Bayard groaned, "And those lugs didn't search you!"

"Oh, yes, they did!" said Strong. "A couple of times. I took into consideration that I might be searched. That's why I carried such small gadgets with me. The boys missed them."

The "Death Angel" in Chinatown, a story of reckless courage, starts on the next page.

NEXT MONTH

Wonder what thrills are in store for you in the next issue? Well, here are a few of them:

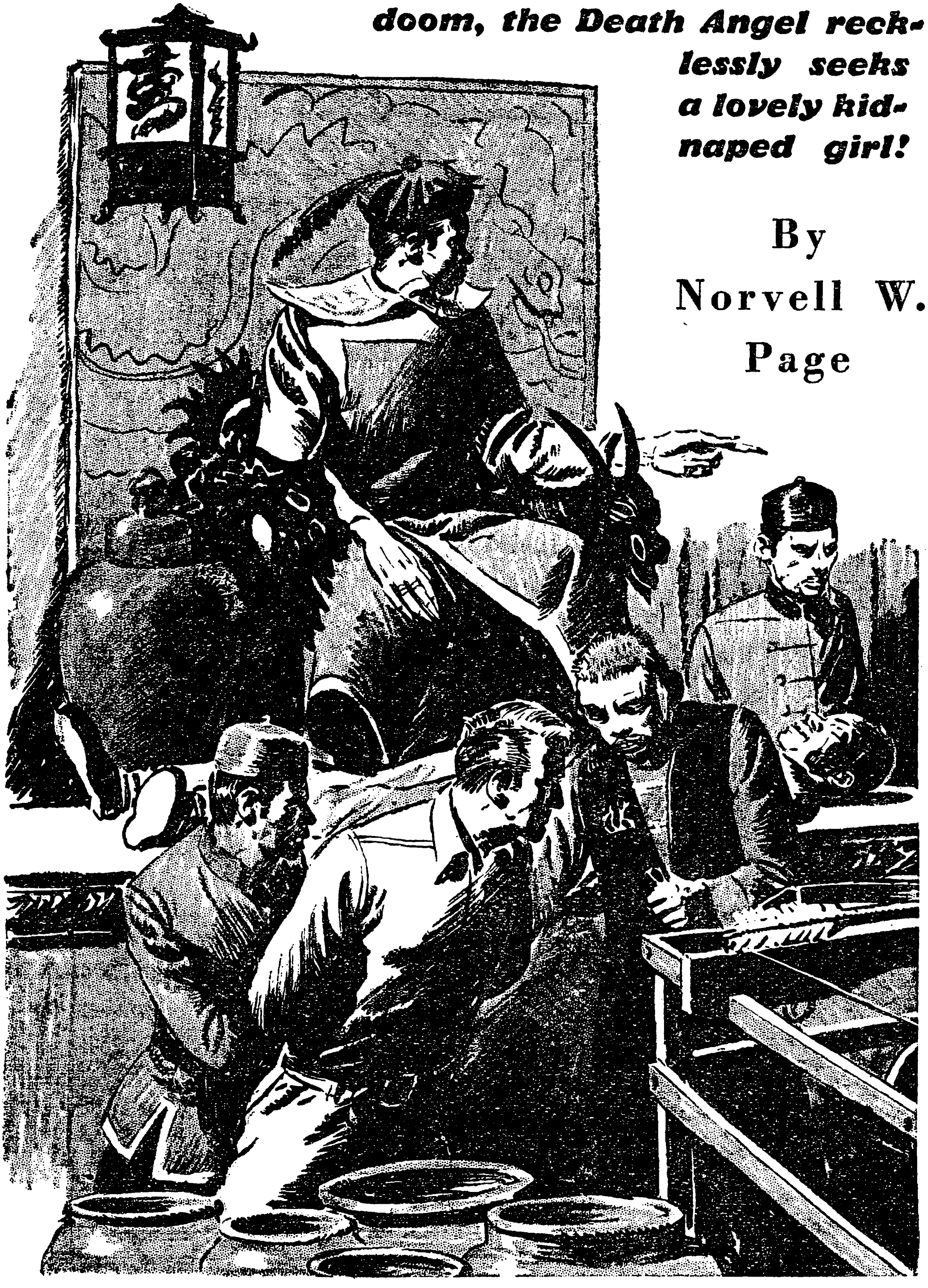
"DEAD MEN DON'T SIGN CHECKS," by Carrol John Daly
"THE ITCHING MEN," by Lester Dent
"DEATH IN THE DARK," by Theodore Tinsley
"DRAKE DEALS DEATH," by W. T. Ballard

and other smashing, exciting stories. Be sure you get your copy of ***Crime Busters*** every month, for every issue is an all-star number! Price, only 10 cents for 128 pages!

BLOOD ARROW

In Chinatown's catacombs of doom, the Death Angel recklessly seeks a lovely kidnaped girl!

By Norvell W. Page



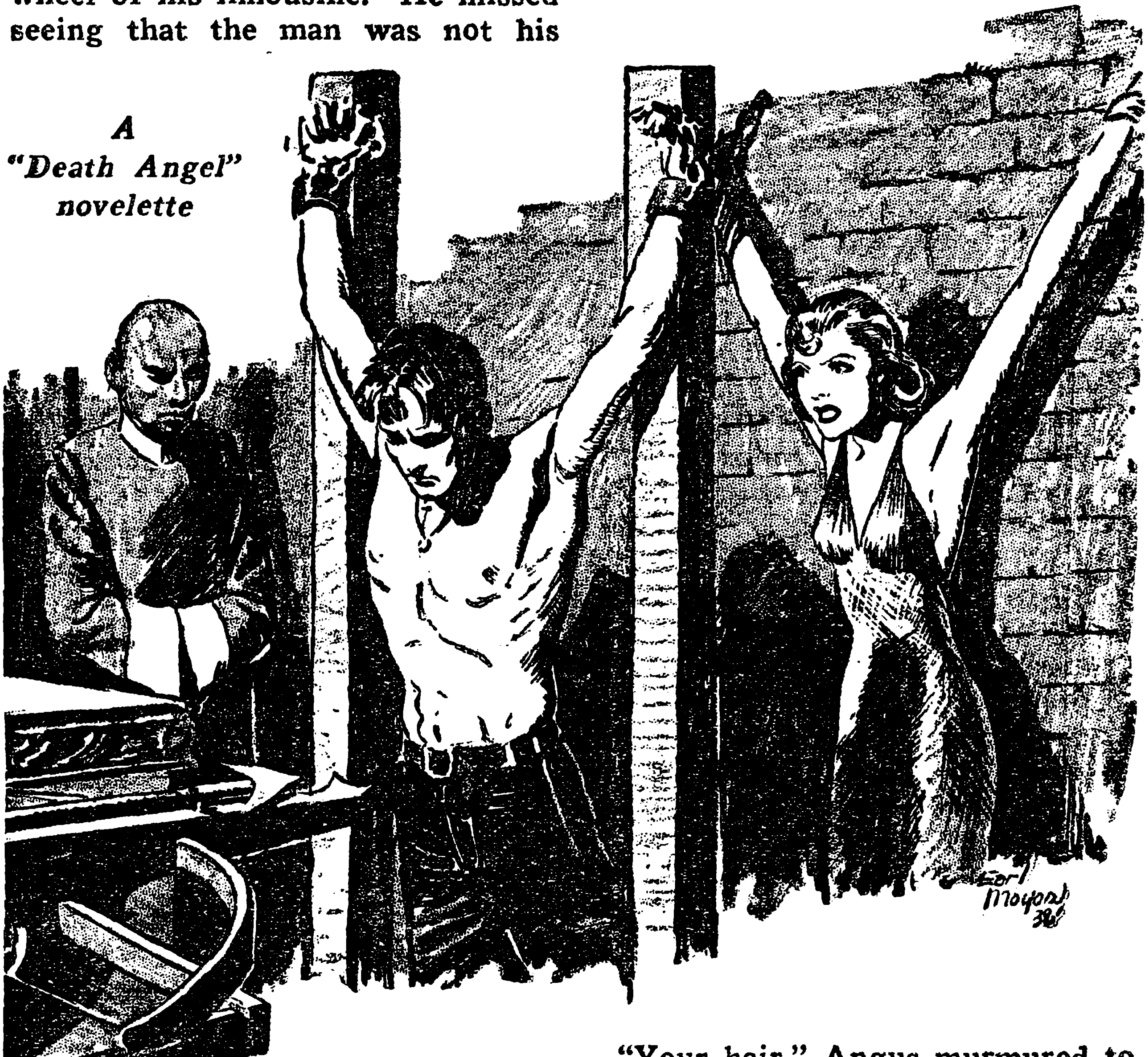
CHAPTER I.

THE DEADLY LIMOUSINE.

ANGUS SAINT-CLOUD was trying to take a night off. For once, the dapper bail-bond detective relaxed the vigilance of his keen brain and turned himself wholly to the lovely Lois Marlowe at his side.

That was a mistake.

His usually wary gray eyes missed the swift, malignant glance flung toward him by the man behind the wheel of his limousine. He missed seeing that the man was not his chauffeur, "Sloppy," but a Chinese with slant, malevolent eyes!



A "Death Angel" novelette

Angus handed Lois into the car with a meticulous bow and, bending low, did not see the false chauffeur strike a match and drop it to the ground; did not see the signal returned from the shadows of dark trees across the street! Angus sprang in beside Lois and the limousine was instantly in motion. Every window in the back was tightly shut, despite the glorious summer weather. Beside the chauffeur, they were wide open and there was a thin-lipped and ruthless smile on the driver's yellow face.

"Your hair," Angus murmured to the girl, "has precisely the sheen of lake water in moonlight."

The girl threw back her head and laughed, and the line of her throat was soft and young. Lois was particularly lovely in a severely white gown, with her hair square-cut and boyish about her face. She merited all Angus's attention. Besides, she was the boss's daughter, and she was equally engrossed in Angus.

The car's speed was mounting rapidly. From a small register near the floor, intended for heat, a spiral of grayish vapor crept out into the tightly closed tonneau. Tentacles of it reached up toward Angus and the girl.

Lois said, "I must compliment you, too, Angus, on your attention to detail. No one but you would think of using incense in your car."

Angus said blankly, "Incense?" Abruptly, all his nerves snapped taut. His gray eyes, masked behind the glitter of his nose-glasses, hardened into fierceness. It was true that he had caught a faint whiff of sandalwood when first he stepped into the limousine, but he had thought it was some perfume that Lois used.

His head whipped about and, in a single glance, he took in the hunched, powerful shoulders of the chauffeur, so much more powerful than Sloppy's; the tightly closed windows. And the scent of sandalwood was suddenly overpowering!

Angus felt fear rip through him like a knotted cord dragged through a cut. Not for himself, but for this lovely girl at his side. And he was unarmed! It was like Angus, even in that first chilling moment when he knew his unwariness had let them step into a trap, that he should seek to save Lois from anxiety.

"We need a bit of air," Angus murmured, almost absently; but his hand, when it moved to the lever to open the window, sped out with the rapidity of a rapier thrust! His hand closed on the lever and the tendons stood out, white and taut, as he threw his explosive strength against it. There was a metallic snap. The lever swung loosely in his hand—but the window remained closed!

LOIS said, "What's the matter, Angus?" Her voice was thick, dreamy, and Angus knew abruptly that his own head was humming as if his breath had been cut off. That incense! It was an overpowering gas! Panic slashed through Angus. He wrenched at the catch of the door and could not move it. He jerked at the panel of glass that separated him from the chauffeur and it would not budge.

"Hold your breath!" he panted to Lois.

"What?" the girl's voice barely reached him. Already, she was succumbing to the gas! All her body was relaxing, slumping down on the lavish cushions. A strange weakness was coursing through his own powerful muscles. It was labor to knot his fist, to set his shoulder for a smash at the glass panel which was closing them in, which was strangling them. If he could shatter it, seize that impostor behind the wheel——

He drew back his fist, the fist that had earned him the terrifying title of the "Death Angel" in the prizefighting ring. He tried to drive it forward with all the weight of his body behind it, with the last bit of his strength. It was a nightmare.

It was as if he moved in a dream—a dream of a slow-motion picture. His fist seemed to float forward, without volition, almost without direction from himself. He saw the gloved knuckles hit the pane, saw the rigid wrist flex. A few cracks radiated out from his hand, so he must have hit it, but he could feel nothing—nothing at all.

His eyes were straining toward the chauffeur. Lord, something had happened to his faithful man, Sloppy—something that soon would be happening to Lois, to himself. He was on his knees, Angus realized, and it was only by a powerful effort that he could hold up his head at all.

His vision was blurring, but in flashes it was extraordinarily keen. He could see, for instance, that the chauffeur had a particularly mongoloid type of head. His ears—— Strange that a man's ears should be pierced through the lobes, as women's were in olden days. Pierced ears——

Angus knew that his mind was wandering; that he was slipping off into unconsciousness. He fought against it and the perspiration beaded out on his forehead. He couldn't get his breath. The sandalwood was choking him——

Abruptly, the chauffeur twisted his head and peered back into the tonneau with an evil, twisted smile, and Angus Saint-Cloud knew an overwhelming horror. There was such cold cruelty in that face and the man was—Chinese!

Dimly, Angus felt that he should recognize the man, but he could never remember faces. Sloppy was useful for that. Sloppy always remembered faces——

The face blurred out before Angus's eyes and he knew that he was falling. Fathomless blackness was below him, and he plunged down and down into it for seeming æons of time. Then, abruptly, his descent was checked and he was rushing upward again.

ANGUS broke from the darkness as from the surface of an inky-black pond. He plunged up, gasping, and darkness was still around him, but it was the blackness of night. He was sitting bolt upright upon comfortable cushions and, as his body began to awake, he found himself still in the car.

"Lois," he muttered thickly.

He peered drunkenly around him, and there was no trace of Lois Marlowe, nor of the evil-faced Chinese who had taken the place of Sloppy. Angus was alone in the limousine, parked on a dark side street, and the windows were open now. He moved a hand heavily toward his forehead and became aware of a sheet of paper, folded and thrust into the palm of his glove.

He fumbled it out, flicked on the dome ceiling light to read—and a great cry burst from his constricted throat. He saw:

> Take this message to George Marlowe. He has until two o'clock this morning to pay two hundred and fifty thousand dollars ransom for his daughter. Otherwise, he will never see her alive again. Wait for a telephone call from——

The signature was an arrow, crudely drawn in red that was the color of blood, of a young girl's blood. Lois, lovely Lois, was the prisoner of Chinese kidnapers! And by two o'clock—— Angus's burning eyes sought out the clock on the dashboard of his car.

God! It was already twenty-five minutes after twelve!

CHAPTER II.

FIGHT FOR LIFE.

GEORGE MARLOWE, the president of Gold Seal Bonding Corporation, was a self-made man and a fighter, but when he heard Angus Saint-Cloud's story, the pallor of his heavy face was like death itself. He moved toward the telephone and his stride faltered a little. While he dialed, his eyes held steadily on Angus.

"You're not hurt," he stated flatly.

Angus Saint-Cloud felt blood stain his cheek bones. It was a condemnation and a just one, he felt, that he should have allowed Lois to be kidnaped without putting up a fight. The fact that the incense must have been an anæsthetic gas of some sort was no excuse. Before he could answer, Marlowe's call went through. In brief, curt tones, he ordered the bonding company offices to get together a quarter of a million dollars and bring it to him at once.

Then he called the police.

"It's a felony case," Marlowe told headquarters shortly. "I don't care to say more than that over the phone. And send some men from the Chinatown detail."

Angus Saint-Cloud started toward the door. "The police will be too slow," he flung over his shoulder. "I'm going down to Chinatown and try to learn something."

"Wait!" Marlowe's crisp tones spun Angus around at the door.

"We're wasting time, Marlowe!" Angus cried.

Marlowe's grim mouth moved in a slight smile and Angus Saint-Cloud felt anger run its slow, tautening course through him. Damn Marlowe! Did Marlowe suspect him of complicity in his daughter's disappearance? Angus's head lifted challengingly and, behind the glitter of his nose-glasses, his gray eyes were fierce. He was a lithe, commanding figure in full evening dress, tall even without his silk hat.

"I want the police to get the details from you firsthand," Marlowe said quietly. "Better wait, and——" The whirring of the telephone cut short his words and he scooped up the instrument with a hand that trembled a little.

"Lois!" he cried, and his face brightened. "Are you all right? *My God!* Yes, I'll have the money here in an hour at most and—Lois! *Lois!* You devils! If you hurt her I'll——"

Marlowe let the phone drop from his hand and his shoulders sagged. Angus Saint-Cloud reached him in a bound and signaled the operator frantically. He was aware of Marlowe staring at him with eyes that scarcely seemed to see, but he was concentrating on the phone call. While he still hammered at it, the police came tramping into the room. Marlowe's voice, snapping out the curt details of the abduction, was more like the familiar tones Angus knew so well.

ANGUS slammed up the telephone. "That call came from the Chop Loy restaurant in Chinatown. A public phone! Damn it, I tell you we're wasting time here!"

He swung around to find Marlowe's eyes boring into him. There were four police detectives in the room and, at the door, two uniformed men stood guard. Angus had a sudden trapped feeling. Hell, he was right. Marlowe did suspect him!

Marlowe said heavily, "A girl can't scream in a restaurant without attracting some attention, Saint-Cloud. I'm afraid the call was traced wrong—or else you're lying!"

Impatience tightened Angus's muscles. It was all right to suspect him, probably inevitable under the circumstances, but while they fooled with him, time was speeding past—and Lois was in the hands of those damnable Chinese! Casually, Angus Saint-Cloud removed his glasses and put them away in their metal case.

Marlowe's voice snapped out, "Be

careful! When he takes off the glasses, he's getting ready to fight! And don't make any mistake because he looks so harmless. He has killed men with his fists!"

Angus Saint-Cloud laughed lightly. He made a debonair figure in his faultless evening dress, complete even to the white gloves he dangled in one hand. There was a slight discrepancy in those gloves, however. Instead of being white silk, they were made of thick leather. They would protect his knuckles. Idly, he began to draw them on. He wouldn't stay here while Lois—*died!*

"Really, Marlowe," he said, smiling, "I thought better of your brain power than this. It's plain you suspect me. Surely, you can't think I would stage an abduction in such a stupid fashion!"

Marlowe nodded his big head. "That's why you almost got away with it, Saint-Cloud," he said heavily. "It's clever because you have deliberately thrown yourself under suspicion. But your men made a mistake when they allowed Lois to speak over the telephone. She told me that you are the one who kidnaped her!"

Angus Saint-Cloud stared at his powerfully built employer and felt his own eyes widen in amazement. "Lois—said that? But of course she did! Her kidnapers made her! You fools! Can't you see that they're trying to keep you from doing anything until it's too late!"

Marlowe made no answer, and one of the detectives shouldered his way forward. He was a gray-haired man with a jaw like a bulldog and a mouth as uncompromising as the flap of a government mail box.

"Take it easy, Saint-Cloud," he said gently, "and don't try your Death Angel punch on me. It might work, but there are too many of us. Suppose you just run over your story of the kidnaping."

Angus Saint-Cloud beat his fists together. "There isn't time, Dugan! They only gave us until two o'clock, and it's almost one now! You don't think they'll turn her loose, do you, once they get the money? Not Chinese criminals!"

The detective named Dugan wagged his gray head. "Don't be impatient with an old gray-head like me, Angus. Just start at the beginning——"

FURIOUSLY, Angus raced over the story again. "A Chinese with earring holes in his ears?" Dugan interrupted. "Now, you see, Angus, you're giving us too good a story. Chinks don't do things like that. Superstitious, you know. They got to go whole and perfect to their ancestors. Why, they even save the hair they cut off and their fingernail parings!"

"Can't you see, fool——" Angus began, then stopped as he recognized the futility of his protest. Somewhere in the house, a clock began to chime the hour. One o'clock! In another hour—Lois would die! He had to get out of here and at once. Marlowe and the police were so convinced of his guilt that they would do nothing as long as he was a prisoner.

But Dugan was right. There were too many of them for him to fight his way clear. He was standing beside the table on which the phone rested and there was a lamp there, too, though there were other lights in the room.

Angus took out his glass case and pinced the spectacles on his nose while he talked rapidly. "Dugan, you're an expert on the Chinese," he said. "I'm not, but somewhere I've read about some men in north

China, a brotherhood of criminals, who pierce their ears. This man looked larger than the south and central Chinese, and northerners are larger."

Angus was tapping the table now with the edge of his metal glass case. It was open a little and the edge of the top was sharp. He was tapping just beside the lamp cord——

Dugan nodded encouragingly, "Go ahead, Saint-Cloud. Confession is good for the soul, so I've been told."

Angus cursed at him angrily, but in a pleasant voice. "You're as hard-headed as all Irishmen, Dugan!" He rapped the edge of the glass case down on the electric cord and the strength flowed into his hand, so that the tendons stood out in his wrist. He ground the sharp edge down through the insulation——

There was a sudden, blue-white flash of light. It was exactly as if that electric flash drew all the light of the room into that one focus. When it went out, there was not a gleam of light in the entire room. But Angus didn't need to see. At the instant the flash started, Angus was in motion. A short step forward and his left drove into Dugan's jaw.

DUGAN'S startled curse stopped short. There was a tearing crash as he went over against the table and carried it to the floor with him. The lamp made a tinkling, continuous sound of broken glass that lasted for long seconds. Men were shouting in the darkness, taking stumbling, blind steps. A flashlight's dazzling white beam cut through the room. Across it flickered the shadow of a thrown chair. The light went out. A moment later, window glass smashed under a heavy impact.

"The window!" Marlowe shouted. "Outside and get him! I'll go after ——" His voice died out with a grunt of effort and Marlowe's huge bulk blotted out the faint light at the window. Men stormed across the room and out through the hall doorway. Their feet made a thunderous racket through the corridor.

In the darkness, Angus Saint-Cloud laughed softly. He bent over Dugan's unconscious body and found his revolver, then he moved soundlessly out into the hallway also. He began to run, heavily, shouting, and strangely his voice had a brogue like Dugan's!

"Get the black traitor!" he cried. "But don't hurt him too much. Let me get my hands on him!"

He lunged out the front door. "Around to the back!" he shouted. "I saw him through the window!"

Men circled the house shouting and, a moment later, Angus's heavy limousine purred into life. He whirled it down the drive from Marlowe's stately home, burst out into the street at forty miles an hour.

The limousine heeled far over, then straightened out on screaming tires and accelerated rapidly. There was a slight smile on Angus's lips, but no man would have smiled in response. It was his fighting smile. He had worn it when he killed men with his fists.

Five minutes past one by the clock on the dashboard, and Chinatown was twenty minutes away—if nothing happened to slow him. Thirty-five minutes to locate and smash open a Chinese gang of kidnapers, to save Lois. Lovely Lois, with her gay laughter and the smile in her eyes and that curious, quick way of lifting her chin that made her throat so soft and inviting—— Angus choked down a curse.

Thirty-five minutes!

CHAPTER III.

DEATH WITH PIERCED EARS.

WITHIN minutes the radio was alive with alarms for Angus Saint-Cloud. He heard the police broadcaster weaving a net for him. They knew where he was headed, too—toward Chinatown. His license number! Angus's smile grew thinner and he tucked the revolver under his thigh. He wouldn't shoot a policeman, but punctured tires could stop pursuit, too. He didn't intend to be stopped!

He chose the most direct course and bored straight down Fifth Avenue. They would hardly expect that, and his limousine would be less conspicuous there, though it was strange for a man in formal evening dress to occupy the chauffeur's seat. He suffered a twinge then as he remembered the man who should be occupying this seat. Sloppy!

What had those Chinese fiends done to him when they put one of their number in his place? Well, if Sloppy was still a prisoner, he would find him in the same place with Lois—Angus hoped.

The enormity of the task before him would have stopped a lesser man than Angus Saint-Cloud cold, but he was used to fighting against odds. The prize ring had never seen him falter, but his heart had gone out of him after a man had died there under his fists. Angus had switched to a profession where such men as he struck would deserve to die! He flexed the fingers of his hands on the wheel. God grant that soon he would have the chance to strike at them!

He jerked the limousine to a halt in a dark side street off the Bowery and was flinging to the street when the shrill note which heralded another police broadcast stopped him.

"Calling all cars!" the announcer snapped. *"An armored car of the Gold Seal Bonding Corporation was ambushed and robbed in Fulton Street. The driver and guard were killed and cash taken to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. Angus Saint-Cloud is suspected. Watch out for him. He is dangerous and armed——"*

The broadcast ran on, but Angus snapped it off with a fury too deep for cursing. The blind fools! The Chinese had collected their ransom money now, and there was no longer any reason for Lois Marlowe to be kept alive! And yet, damn it, he couldn't go into Chinatown in this garb! The place would be swarming with police looking for Angus Saint-Cloud. But along the Bowery were all-night second-hand shops, pawnshops. A man could get old clothing there.

IT took Angus Saint-Cloud five minutes to make the change and when he shambled finally into Pell Street, there was nothing about him of the meticulous, fashionable detective whom the police hunted.

His clothing was ragged and it did not fit. The hat dragged down over his brows was greasy, and his shoes were broken. The dapper detective was profoundly uncomfortable in them, but they gave him a blessed security from arrest—he hoped. He did not wear his glasses and, under that hat brim, his eyes stabbed fiercely into the shadows of Chinatown. Somewhere here, Lois was hidden. Damn it, she had to be here, or—or he would fail. And failure meant *death to Lois!*

Minutes dragged past while Angus Saint-Cloud shuffled through the dark, narrow streets of Chinatown. He went directly to the restaurant from which the telephone operator had reported the call made. But that was madness. As Marlowe said, no captive girl would be taken to make a call over a public phone. The wires must be tapped. If he had time to trace out the wiring—— There had been no time to tell that idea to the police, even if they would have listened.

On a chance, Angus shuffled into the restaurant and from it called police headquarters. "We have the ransom for the Marlowe girl," he said in a hoarsely disguised voice. "In three hours, she will be turned loose."

He left the restaurant hurriedly. They would try to trace that call down. If he had any luck, if the police displayed any intelligence in the matter, they might trace down the wire-tap. He couldn't afford to overlook any chances—not when Lois's life was at stake.

He pushed out again into the dark Chinatown streets, eying every yellow face he saw; inspecting their ear lobes with piercing regard. If such a mark were as rare as Dugan indicated, it might give him a lead. But time was so short!

Abruptly, Angus looked up. A group of Chinese were ambling along, chattering. In mid-word, they stopped and, in a body, stepped down from the sidewalk.

At first, there seemed no reason for this; and then a man, taller by a head than the Chinese about him, stepped up from the low, dark entrance of a shop and turned down the street away from Angus. The detective's heart leaped up in his chest. He was remembering what he had told Dugan, of a brotherhood of North China, which marked themselves by piercing their ears. And the men of North China were tall!

EAGERLY, Angus took up the man's trail. It was difficult, for as the tall Chinese stalked majestically down the walk, other celestials darted from his path like frightened curs from the menace of a mastiff. It left Angus almost alone upon the sidewalk. His hand slid under his ragged coat and touched the butt of the revolver tucked into his waistband.

He quickened his pace. Following the man might achieve nothing. He might be going innocuously home. And seconds were precious. He must get close enough to see if his ears were pierced.

Angus was within two yards of the tall Chinese when the man turned toward the dark doorway of a tenement house. For an instant, as he turned, the beams of the corner street light slanted in under his hat brim—and Angus caught a breath high in his throat, then dispelled it while his lips curved into the smile Death knew so well. The ears of the Chinese were pierced!

"Just a minute, friend!" Angus called softly.

In the shadow of the doorway, the tall Chinese turned with the litheness of a crouched panther about to spring. Angus shuffled toward him warily, gun still in his waistband. For what he had to do here, his fists would serve better! He would not use the full strength of his body, but his fists would strike hard enough and painfully enough to force this lean monster to talk!

"I once had a friend," Angus said softly, "a man of the East whose ears were pierced——"

He was within a yard of the man and he had time to say no more. With a snarl that was animallike in its ferocity, the Chinese leaped. His hand flashed upward in a slashing stroke and Angus caught the glint of metal in his fist. Good God! The man gripped a long pair of scissors, opened and locked in position by clutching fingers. From his fist, the long blades projected murderously. One slash of that fearful weapon would tear a man wide open.

On the instant, memory came flooding back to Angus's brain. He knew now the whole of the history of the organization of which he had read in college days, the brotherhood of criminals he had mentioned to Dugan. The scissors had done it.

They were the Brotherhood of *Er-Chien,* of the "Ear-Arrow" as the Chinese satirically termed scissors. The brotherhood had had its birth long ago in the ancient days when it was considered quite right to cut off the ears of a servant who didn't hear his orders correctly. Ear-arrows——

By a frantic leap aside, Angus evaded the first upward stroke of the scissors. He jumped in again as that horrible weapon flashed upward—and suddenly it was slashing down again at his face! With that double-pointed weapon, the Chinese had no need even to take the time to turn his fist!

It was too late to check his leap toward the man. Angus's left was lancing toward the unprotected jaw and his whole body's weight was driving in behind the punch. One thing he could do. He changed the direction of his blow, stabbed it upward at that descending arm of death!

The scissors were knocked fractionally aside, but the stroke was too vicious to turn entirely. The blade raked through Angus's coat, gashed into his shoulder muscles as the Death Angel pivoted on his left foot and slammed his right fist up under the jaw of the Chinese!

The smarting shock of the wound lent added power to his blow. There was a strangled, croaking gust of breath from the man's throat, then the Chinese fell writhing to the floor of the narrow areaway!

INSTANTLY, Angus stepped down hard on the wrist that gripped the scissors, kicked them away and dropped on his knees beside the man. The eyes of the Chinese were bulging, his lips blue. Angus swore under his breath. Once more, the power of his fist had betrayed him. His punch had crushed the man's windpipe. Even as Angus knelt beside him, the man died with a final convulsive shudder.

Angus threw a quick glance over his shoulder. The street behind him was deserted. All the other Chinese had run for cover. Down at the corner, two men in police blue were swinging around into Mott Street. They checked, staring about them at the empty thoroughfare, then began to move cautiously forward.

One of them whipped out a flashlight and its brilliant beam quested over the dark tenement fronts, focused abruptly on Angus where he crouched!

Guns glittered at once in the hands of the police. The men began to run toward him.

"Halt!" was their hail. "Halt, or we'll shoot to kill!"

Angus dived head-first into the areaway. A gun crashed out behind him and he heard the bullet crunch through the flimsy woodwork of the door. His shoulder was paining damnably now, and its heat ran through him like fever-weakness. Grimly, he seized the dead Chinese by the collar and dragged him from sight.

It was a laborious task to get the man to his shoulders, but Angus, that grim smile set on his mouth, managed it and darted up the steps seconds ahead of the pounding feet of the police.

Their whistles were piping shrilly now, the beams of their white lights intensifying in the darkness of the areaway. Within a moment, they would be in sight, their hungry guns would——

Angus strained up the shaking stairs. If he could once round the platform turn a half-dozen steps away! Now four steps—now two steps——

The light of the flashes washed over him. With a desperate effort, Angus flung himself up those last two steps with the body across his shoulders. Guns crashed out thunderously behind. He felt the dead Chinese jerk to the impact of their bullets, then he was around the curve. Somehow he was on his feet and running. The police pounded heavily behind him.

Angus hit a closed door with the combined weight of his own body and his burden. It crashed inward. He went through, glimpsed a window. With a heave of his shoulders he hurled the dead Chinese through it, pivoted and raced back to a post beside the doorway.

The cops burst through in the next instant. Angus thrust out a foot to trip the first, caught the second behind the ear with a lightning right. While the second man still plunged through the air, unconscious from the instant of the blow, Angus took a light step forward and drove the toe of his shoe accurately, and not too hard, against the temple of the man he had tripped.

There was abrupt silence in the halls that a moment before had echoed to the hammer and shouts of the chase. Below there were little creepings and squeaks like the sounds of frightened mice.

Reeling, panting from effort, Angus raced down the stairs, out along a black hallway toward the spot where he had hurled the dead Chinese. He burst out into the court—and stopped dead in his tracks. He teetered back against the wall and something very like a sob burned up through his throat.

The dead Chinese had vanished!

CHAPTER IV.

CATACOMBS OF DOOM!

USELESS to search through the night for some trace of the dead man and those who had carried him away. Angus Saint-Cloud could feel the liveness of the dark around him. Eyes were there, watching, he knew. And death waited. Angus Saint-Cloud threw back his head and laughed. To hell with death! His fists knotted.

He pivoted on his heel and raced back through the narrow hallway toward the street. The police would be out there now; other police answering the pipe of those danger whistles, the crash of guns. He reached the areaway where he had killed the Chinese and stopped, staring at the glitter of metal on the floor—the scissors.

With a swoop, Angus had the vicious weapon, open in his fist as the dead man had held it, stained with his own blood. The Brotherhood of the *Er-Chien,* of the Ear-Arrow. Why, damn it, that ransom note had been signed with a blood-red arrow!

Laughter pushed once more to Angus Saint-Cloud's throat, the deep chest laughter of a man with fight-madness in his brain. Angus Saint-Cloud stepped out into Mott Street and he moved no longer with a shuffle.

His left arm hung useless at his

side, the muscles gashed and stiff with pain. His right hand clutched the open scissors and he moved lightly, moved on his toes as a man going into battle—the Death Angel going into battle!

Police came pounding around the lower corner of Mott Street, too late to see Angus turn the "Bloody Angle" that joined it to Pell. Shutters were slamming home on the windows of shops. Frightened yellow faces peered out. Somewhere a gun roared angrily, but if the lead whipped near Angus he did not hear or heed. The shop from which the man of the *Er-Chien* had emerged was just ahead. Angus went in with the stride of a conqueror.

BEHIND the counter, a fat-bellied little Cantonese crouched. His eyes glittered under fat brows, slid off sideways beneath the assault of Angus's glare.

"Thou *Ta Tu Tzeurh.*" Angus said raspingly. "Thou fat-belly, tub of butter, *Hwang Yo.* Take me to the *Wong,* the chieftain of the *Er-Chien!*" He stepped closer, waggling the blood-stained scissors. "Quickly, before I open that so-fat belly of thine, with my little *Er-Chien!*"

The scissors poised threateningly and the fat shopkeeper prostrated himself, banged his forehead on the floor. "At once, oh power of *Er-Chien!*" he whined. "At once!"

He bobbed up from the floor, scuttled toward the rear of the little shop. Angus Saint-Cloud followed, free-striding, that reckless smile on his lips. Minutes now before Lois was to die. Nothing else mattered. He knew that he walked into a trap. The shopkeeper would fear the *Er-Chien* too much to betray them. That did not matter. So that he came in time to Lois's side, nothing mattered. The Death Angel would find a way.

Thoughtfully, smiling sardonically as he went, Angus drew a design in blood on the sides of the passageway through which he walked. It was a blood arrow, and it pointed the path he had taken. Eastern eyes had seen him enter here and they would be eager to point the way to the police. Torture itself would not make them betray their own, but Angus was not of the East.

Yes, they would betray the interloper to the police—he hoped. The blood arrows would point the way—he also hoped. But he did not depend on them. He leaned upon the strength of his right arm and the *Er-Chien* he grasped in his hand.

There was a feverish glitter in Angus's eyes. They would take the scissors from him. He would be overpowered, bound, a sacrifice with Lois to the greed of these monsters. The smile hardened on his mouth. The Chinese liked torture, didn't they?

Slowly, he lifted the scissors until they hovered over his wounded left shoulder. He laughed explosively; then that sound stopped, on a caught breath. When the Chinese rushed out at him from behind the cover of the drapes forming the walls of the chamber into which he had been led, Angus threw high his right arm.

"I come in peace!" he cried harshly. "Take me to your *Wong!*"

The light was pale and faint in the chamber, but the Chinese caught the glint of metal on Angus's left shoulder. The Chinese stopped, stared at Angus, at this man who walked with steel thrust into his body, and they broke into a high chattering. Presently, hands gripped his arms and he was thrust forward through the curtains.

And Angus had guessed right. They did not remove the scissors. Only, one of them carelessly slapped the steel and it bit deeper into his muscles, so deeply that Angus sagged momentarily in the grip of the men who carried him. They burst into high, thin laughter.

ANGUS did not lose consciousness, but for moments his senses swam in the half-light where he knew only pain and despair. When the room was clear before his vision again, his arms were bound to his sides and two men held him prisoner in the middle of a great underground chamber.

Before him, a man sat upon a dragon throne, a gaunt, cruel-faced Chinese, tall as men are tall in North China, thin-lipped and ruthless in his exquisite robes of golden silk. With a start, Angus realized that the man was the same who had acted as his chauffeur to trap him. Once more he had a haunting sense of familiarity about that face. If only Sloppy could see it, he would remember. But Sloppy might well be already dead!

Even in the midst of such horror, Angus knew a brief joy. His deductions, at least, had been right. He was in the hands of the same men who had stolen Lois. The man on the dragon throne proved it.

At the foot of the throne, flanked by stalwart North Chinese, lay the body of the man Angus had slain. And through the ear of each man, Angus saw, was thrust a tiny golden arrow!

"I come to bring you a message," Angus said when he could find words. "It is this: Free the girl. Your ransom has been paid. If you kill her, not all of China can hide you from the white man's vengeance!"

The man on the throne, the *Wong* of the *Er-Chien* as he plainly was, uttered a low laugh. Its sound was soft, yet it rasped like a saw cutting into living bone.

"Do you talk of vengeance, white man?" the Chinese *Wong* asked softly. "You who come to us after killing one of my slaves?"

Angus's head was high. "It is the first taste of the vengeance to come!" he rapped.

THE Chinese laughed again and moved languidly a hand on which long nail-guards glittered with jewels. Instantly, the curtains at one end of the room were whipped aside. Angus saw Lois then, a pale and shaken Lois. She was spread-eagled against the wall and, before her, Sloppy was similarly tied to two upright beams.

Angus felt a brief joy that they were still alive, but his gladness left him in a breath. As he realized the reason that they were placed so, helpless, one before the other, agony shot through him more fiercely than any pain from his wound. He struggled against his bonds, but it was in vain.

Poised before those two helpless prisoners was a powerful catapult. It was cocked, and in the arrow-slot there lay a gigantic golden arrow! At a touch on the trigger, that giant arrow would be hurled straight at Sloppy's body. It would rip through him in a breath and—pin Lois to the wall!

Even as the full enormity of the thing struck Angus, as he fought in frenzy against his captors, he was lifted and carried forward until he stood behind the catapult. In a trice, the rope lanyard attached to the trigger had been run through an overhead pulley and knotted about his neck in a hangman's noose!

It was exactly calculated. If Angus Saint-Cloud stood on his toes, the rope was taut, but it did not pull the trigger of the catapult. If he settled on his heels, or reeled off that balance even for an instant, the catapult would be discharged and that arrow would rip through Sloppy, through Lois's lovely body like a bullet punching through tissue paper!

"It is nice problem, eh, my fine vengeance-bringer?" said the *Wong* softly. "How long can a man stand on his toes? It is a pity we are not able to give the matter a perfectly fair test. You are not quite as strong as some men, because of the arrow in your shoulder. But it would not do to remove it now, would it? It would weaken you, and we want you strong for the ordeal!"

Angus Saint-Cloud said, stiffly, through his rope-constricted throat, "Kill me, if you must, but that girl is——"

The *Wong* laughed, and once more the sound was rasping. Angus remembered the simile that had come to his mind—like a saw on living bone!

"But I shall not be killing her, my bringer of vengeance. *It will be you!*"

He clapped his hands together lighty, and the curtains fell. Angus Saint-Cloud was alone with Lois Marlowe, with Sloppy—and with the torture machine. Already his legs were aching. If he so much as reeled, off balance, for an instant——

Even the Death Angel's fighting smile grew stiff, faded from his lips!

The curtains parted briefly and the evil face of the *Wong* of the *Er-Chien* peered through. "One thing I forgot to tell you. When the catapult is discharged, it will also spring open a trapdoor under your feet, Saint-Cloud. It's too bad. I'm afraid it will hang you!"

CHAPTER V.

BLOOD ARROW.

SLOPPY'S blurred face was white and drawn, but fear was no longer there. Only an intense weariness. Angus Saint-Cloud tried to bring the smile to his lips for Sloppy's benefit, and could not. Behind Sloppy, he could catch the sheen of Lois Marlowe's hair; but her face was hidden. She did not speak. Her hands, bound to the walls by the wrists, were knotted into white, impotent fists.

"Geez, boss," Sloppy said hoarsely. "If it was only me, I'd say shoot and get it over with. I been here so long that——"

"Courage!" Angus squeezed the word hoarsely past the rope that was slowly strangling him. He had a faint chance to save himself and the others. Not the police. He put no real reliance in their coming. He nerved himself to the attempt.

Already, the muscles of his legs were knotting with cramp from standing on tiptoes. Heaven knew how much longer he would be able to maintain himself in this position. Soon his feet and legs would go numb and after that—after that, he would reel, briefly off balance, and the mighty arrow would snuff out two lives an instant before he himself was hanged!

The hang rope, which also was the trigger lanyard of the catapult, was fastened beneath his left ear with a hangman's knot. It was so tight already that his head was beginning to buzz from constricted blood vessels, from scanty breathing. Yes, he must take his chance at once—or not at all. If the Chinese were watching—— Well, he would have failed and he could win a quick death for all of them by dropping down on his heels.

Cautiously, Angus strained his neck within the noose of the rope, not attempting to loosen it. He knew that was useless, for a hangman's knot is tied so that it tightens, but never relaxes. He was attempting to get it out from under his ear, move it forward toward his mouth. He staggered once, saw the rope tighten through the pulley, heard its brief metallic creak as the lanyard threatened to yank the trigger. He heard Sloppy suck in a deep, slow breath.

Lois cried out, "For God's sake, get it over with!"

ANGUS made no answer. The rope, in that effort, had slipped out from under his ear and by twisting his head, he might work his plan. He bent his head sideways then, and groped with his teeth for the handles of the scissors embedded in his shoulder!

Angus's eyes were strained wide and unseeing, and there were ridges out along his jaw. If for the barest moment, the pain of those scissors made him sway——

They would not! He braved himself for the pain, for the effort.

It was a fierce strain upon his neck muscles to reach for those scissors against the tug of the rope. He hunched his shoulder and pain made the sweat spring out on his forehead. His lips were drawn back from his teeth and his breath whistled out hoarsely.

Sloppy watched with widening eyes. Incredible, the thing Angus must do; balance himself on tiptoes, hands lashed tightly behind him, while he fought the hang rope to reach those scissors with his teeth and tear them from the wound! And that would be only the beginning!

His lips touched the steel first and the faint shock of that, running along the blades, made weakness wash over him like heat. But he did not desist. He must be swift now or not at all. He gripped the handle with his teeth and, in the same moment, wrenched his head back again. A scream crowded up against his locked teeth and darkness swam before his eyes. Even in that moment of vertigo, he remembered to brace his rigid legs, to balance on tiptoes.

"You got them, boss!" Sloppy whispered softly. "My God, you've got them! They can't lick you, boss. Nobody ever can!"

Slowly, the sharp agony of Angus's shoulder subsided to the old dull ache and he could see again—see the stained, razor-sharp scissors, one handle of which he gripped in his teeth. But how much longer could he balance like this?

There was an intolerable aching in his legs. They were fast going numb! And he was weak—weak. Angus twisted his head about and brought the blade against the hang rope, began to saw on it with quick forward-and-back movements of his head.

It was agonizing work. His jaw muscles tired and the smooth, cold handle slipped between his teeth. There was nothing to press the rope against, nothing but the noose about his neck. His working drew it tauter. It jerked and quivered, creaked in the pulley overhead. There was a drumming in his head like distant tom-toms, like an ax beating on wood. The police?

No, that was nonsense. His mind was breeding hallucinations. His head kept moving, the blade bit into the rope. Sloppy was crying something. He could hear the girl's voice, too, but they formed no articulate words in his brain. He was too far gone.

Only Angus kept sawing away, and the blade kept slipping. It slipped finally and he swayed, off balance. My God, he had no feeling in his legs at all! He was falling, *falling!*

Agony shot through his brain; not pain, but the dread of the thing he knew must be happening. He waited for the heavy twang of the releasing catapult. He didn't hear it. Instead, he thudded against the floor.

ANGUS SAINT-CLOUD lay there numbly, bewildered. But he was supposed to be hanged the instant he tripped the lanyard. Hanged and——

Gradually, he understood and realization brought him surging up from unconsciousness. He had won! He had sliced through the hang rope!

A sound between laughter and a sob pushed itself out between his lips. He thrust his bound, helpless body up from the floor. His feet at least were free, and his mouth. He could still wield those scissors!

Angus stared about him. Sloppy sagged in a faint, in his bonds. Lois Marlowe was staring at him, white-faced. "What happened?" she whispered. "I closed my eyes so long ago, so that I couldn't see. I thought I heard the police breaking in."

Angus's throat hurt when he spoke. "We've got a chance now!" He mouthed the scissors, staggered to his feet and went, wooden-legged, toward Lois, began to saw at her bonds. He was still laboring over it, vainly, when he heard the whisper of the silken curtains behind whipped aside. He whirled, in an agony of apprehension, and was gazing into the cruel, mocking eyes of the *Wong* of the *Er-Chien!*

For a moment, the man's eyes held his; then, the man came forward slowly until he stood beside the catapult.

"Very good," he said softly. "Very, very good. You're a better man than I thought, Angus Saint-Cloud, you have even released the police upon us, but they will not come in time to save you!"

The *Wong* clapped his hands softly and one of his servitors darted in under the curtains. With a wave of his long-nailed hand, the slit-eyed Chinese indicated the catapult!

A great cry rose in Angus's throat and the man darted toward the trailing lanyard of the machine. He seized it in his fist and Angus saw him set himself for the wrench that would release that awful arrow! Death! Death for Lois and Sloppy!

With an oath, Angus drove himself forward, straight at the *Wong* himself! Even in his desperation, Angus did not act blindly. As if bolted from a catapult himself, he hammered his shoulder squarely into the *Wong* and hurled him fairly atop the catapult's arrow!

Pain flashed through Angus's wounded shoulder; he swayed and fell atop the squealing Chinese at the instant the catapult let go with a deep bass twang like the snapping of a Gargantuan cello string. Angus was snatched up and hurled as if by a giant's hand—and his senses blotted out.

IMPOSSIBLE to tell how much later it was his eyes opened, but there was a horrid fear in Angus's breast. He stared about him, saw men in police blue, saw Lois in her father's arms. And Sloppy—Sloppy lay beside him with a bandage about his ribs. He smiled faintly at Angus.

"It's all right, boss," he said. "Your knees caught me in the ribs, that's all."

"But the arrow!" Angus stammered. "The arrow——"

He twisted his head about and saw the butt of the arrow. It protruded from the back of the *Wong's* neck, and its head was still buried somewhere inside the man's body. Because it had struck through the whole length of his body, because of the double weight of the Chinese and Angus, which it had carried, the arrow had been turned from the terrible execution for which it was intended! Angus closed his eyes and breathed out a thankful sigh.

It was the rasp of Dugan's voice which snapped Angus's head toward him. "It's very pretty, Saint-Cloud," he said. "But it won't work. You're not the first man who has turned on the men under him when he got in a jam. We've got you sewed up tight for this kidnaping!"

Angus stared up at the man's face incredulously. "Surely," he said, "you can't believe—— Ask Miss Marlowe over there!"

"I've asked her," Dugan said. "She says these men called you boss, and that's that."

Sloppy said thickly, "These cops are nuts, boss. You know me. I never forget a face!"

Angus said dully, "No, Sloppy, you never forget a face."

"Okay. Then you get Mr. Marlowe to look at the dead chink over there. The one that swallowed the arrow." Angus stared at Sloppy and felt hope surge. Then Sloppy had remembered!

Dugan was scowling. "What the hell is this?"

SLOPPY smiled up at him with his battered, blurry face. "Oh, just a little memory trick, copper. That chink is one Marlowe fired about six months ago. Used to be the Marlowe's house boy. I don't remember his name, but Marlowe will. He was fired for crookedness. The Death Angel here got the evidence on him. When the chink left, he swore he'd get even with both Marlowe and the Angel. Ain't that right, Mr. Marlowe?"

Marlowe crossed, quickly for a big man, and peered down at the dead Chinese. "Damn, you're right," he cried. "Dugan, I withdraw my charges. That man did swear to get even with us both. That explains why he tried to put the blame on Angus."

Lois came forward eagerly. Her face was alight now. "Angus risked his life to save mine," she said. "He even tried to stop that arrow with his own body—— Oh, Angus!"

Lois dropped down on her knees beside Angus and Marlowe was smiling at him.

"Forgive me, Angus," Lois whispered.

"Forgive me, old man," said Marlowe. "I was pretty much upset. Lois——"

Angus drew in a deep breath. "Think nothing of it," he said lightly. "Lois could turn any man's head. Don't, Lois. Confound it, you know I hate to look—well, like this. I had to buy some perfectly disreputable clothing to avoid the imbecilic police."

Lois said, "I think you look lovely."

Angus laughed, "That, my dear, shows how little you know about sartorial elegance!"

SMOKED OUT

Death rides the Limited—until Boxcar Reilly smokes out a few killers!

By Laurence Donovan

CHAPTER I.

MURDER UP AHEAD.

"BOXCAR" REILLY believed he had "Old Man Trouble" licked this time. He was sure the train was clean, from the engine pilot to the polished rail of the observation platform. The ace railroad bull of the L. & S. swung his hard, lean bulk along the aisles, going from the smoker back toward the tail-end club car for the second time, just to satisfy himself.

His cold, gray eyes ticketed the face of each passenger. Not one had the slightest earmark of a crook. Sleet ticked an icy refrain upon the glass of the Pullman windows. Not a Chinaman's chance, was his thought, for any living thing to be riding outside tonight.

Unluckily for Boxcar Reilly, he could not see the black-slickered figure clinging to a ventilator on one of the tops. A figure with a pinched, granite face, whose one arm encircled the air pipe and held him flat to the car roof, and whose other hand gripped a light machine gun under his long, black garment.

Unluckily, too, for Boxcar Reilly that a crook doesn't break out in a telltale rash because of criminal intent. For one passenger inside was there to pull the emergency stop cord of the Upstate Limited. There was nothing about this passenger to invoke the violence of Boxcar's big, red hands or the restraint of his steel cuffs.

So the clickety-clack of the Upstate Limited over the rail joints made a kind of a song to Boxcar, and he had no means of knowing it was a murder song—tuned to death up ahead. For this time, he was sure an express shipment from a gold amalgam plant would go through to its consignees in safety.

Twice, similar consignments to the jewelry trade had been knocked off.

Another "Boxcar" Reilly railroad story

Three special guards had died in the two holdups. Both times the Upstate Limited had been stopped on the same ten-mile stretch of track. Each time, the bandit killers had apparently evaporated into thin air.

But this time, Boxcar Reilly was convinced he had out-smarted any possible robbery. The gold shipment was aboard the express secretly, and Boxcar had insisted there should be no special guard. Only Boxcar, himself, and one man in the express car knew about this.

The Upstate Limited was clearing the last boards in the big yard when Boxcar bulked in the narrow vestibule of the club car. He wore a special grin now, and he slicked back his unruly red hair. Then his grin went sour, and he grunted, "Damned if *you* wouldn't know it!"

A pretty blond girl with a piquant, saucy face cornered bright eyes upon him, but apparently did not know he was there. And she was Boxcar's one-and-only heart interest, "Blondie" Doran, who was going upstate to spend the week-end with her Aunt Effie.

Blondie dealt them off the arm in the railroad lunch room. She had taken the greatest interest in Boxcar's detective career. The last time it had been with a gun, and she had killed a man. But the way she was now listening to the gaunt, hayseedy man in the chair beside her, she had forgotten that Boxcar Reilly existed.

BOXCAR kept on swearing under his breath and fumbled a stubby pipe from his pocket. Blondie might have plenty of what it takes to interest any man, but Boxcar had enough of what it took to smoke out any stranger with that rancid, long-cut "burner" of his.

The hayseedy man wore a hand-me-down suit and his wrists stuck out of it too far. He had a wispy beard that worked up and down with his chin. He was showing Blondie a paper, and he was saying, "Yuh have to take special keer of 'em in the moltin' season or they won't lay as many eggs as they oughta."

Blondie looked up at Boxcar's gloomy face and said brightly, "Mr. Gamm is a chicken fancier, big boy."

"I wouldn't have thought it, but maybe he knows how to pick 'em," growled Boxcar. "Glad to meet you, Mr. Gamm."

"Now just what did you mean by that crack?" snapped Blondie.

"Heh-heh-heh!" chuckled Mr. Gamm through his nose. "That's a right good un, mister. Well, I'll be moseyin' back to my sleepin' car, Miss Doran. Ever wanna go into the chicken business, jest drop a line to Obadiah Gamm. I'll leave yuh the paper."

Mr. Gamm, with the amazingly obsolete name of Obadiah, gangled from his chair. His bony ankles lumped out of his cheap suit farther than his wrists. His wispy beard waggled when he talked.

Boxcar sat down and tamped his pipe. He produced a new and shiny cigarette lighter. Blondie's pert nose wrinkled.

"Since when aren't railroad matches good enough for you, and don't light up that stinkpot," she said.

Boxcar grinned cheerfully and barely touched the lighter.

"Why, it works!" exclaimed Blondie. "Never knew they did."

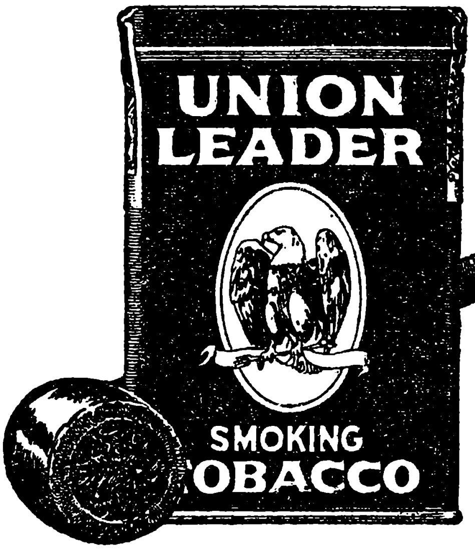
"Latest wrinkle," he said. "Could light it with my hands behind my back. Show you."

He flicked off the flame, took the lighter in his teeth and put his big hands behind him. His teeth snicked and the metal tube blazed.

It's True Love...
when it Lasts for 30 Years

WHEN a feller wins the right gal he don't go blind. But, if he's smart, the only wandering he does is with his eyes . . . and not too much o' that.

It's kind o' like that between a man and his pipe tobacco. Take me . . . I been married to Union Leader 30 years, come Fall. Sure, I've flirted with other brands in my time. But I've always had the horse-sense to come back to Union Leader. I figure that a sweet, easy-goin' disposition should be treasured in a tobacco . . . or a woman. That's why Ma and me and Union Leader are still a happy family.



10¢

FOR PIPE
AND
CIGARETTE

Union Leader

THE GREAT AMERICAN SMOKE

Copyright, 1938, by P. Lorillard Co., Inc.

He applied the flame to the stub pipe. Blondie wrinkled her nose some more and sniffed.

"Six puffs from that garbage can, and we'll have the club car all to ourselves," she said.

"That's an idea," smiled Boxcar, and smoked industriously.

There were two other men and one woman in the club car. The woman was the first to leave, with a venomous glance at the railroad bull.

Blondie was chattering about how some time she wanted Boxcar to meet her Aunt Effie. And she said, "Aunt Effie always said I would come to no good in the city."

Boxcar just grinned and passed on that one. Blondie had the paper Mr. Gamm had left her. It was the *Poultry Journal.* The yellow sticker on it showed a rural route address.

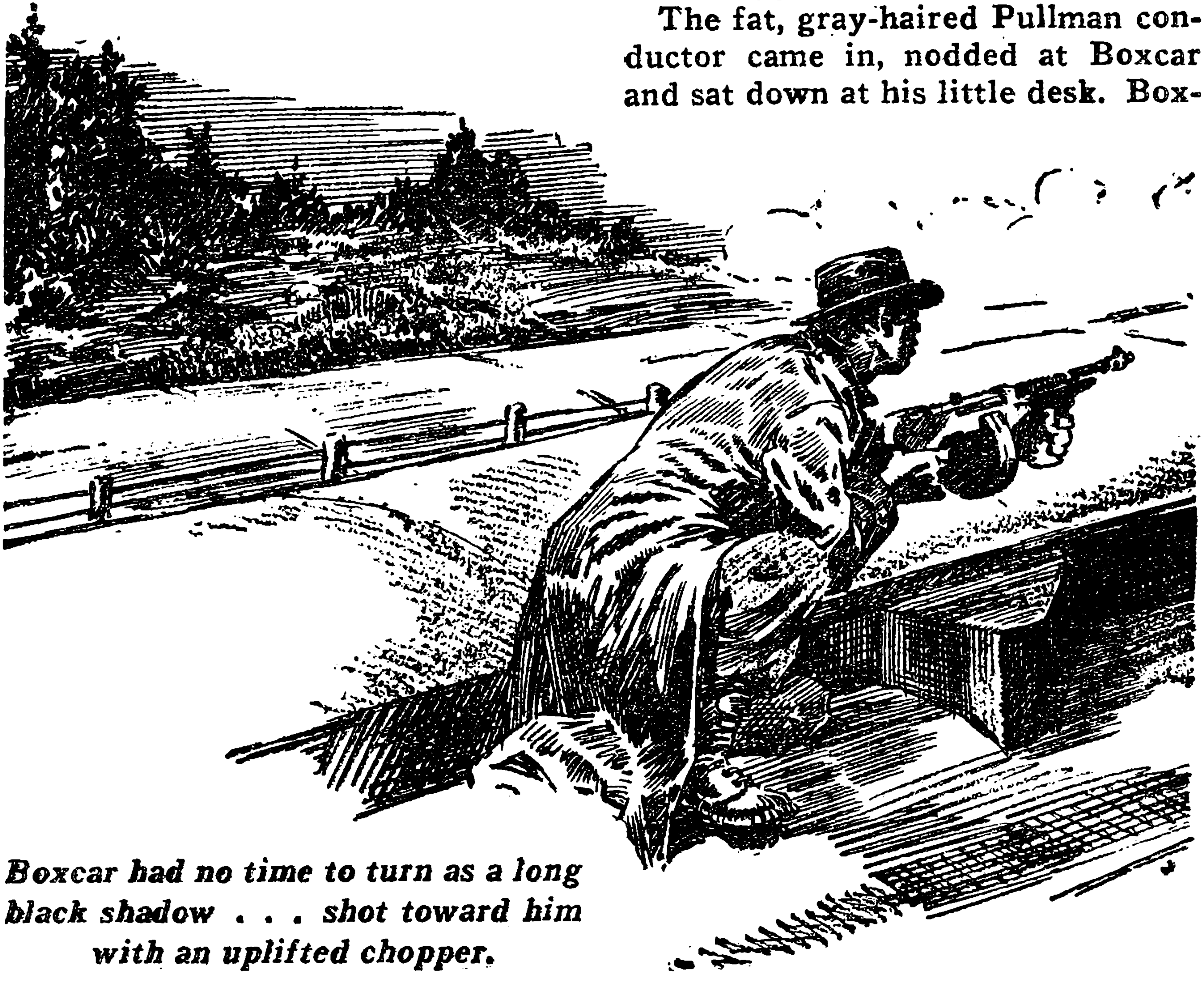
"I wouldn't have believed his name was Obadiah, if it wasn't here on the address," said Blondie.

The two men, who looked like traveling salesmen, got up and went forward out of the club car. Boxcar glanced through the sleet-crusted window at the lonesome stretch of concrete highway flowing past the Limited.

He did not betray it, but his big body suddenly was tense. The Limited was pounding into that ten-mile straightaway where robbery and murder had struck twice; where masked killers had disappeared as mysteriously as if they had never existed.

Boxcar saw there was no traffic in the sleet storm—or that was what he thought at first. Then he did see the lights of one car, but it passed the Limited, red tail-light flicking out quickly. It was going away though, in the opposite direction.

The fat, gray-haired Pullman conductor came in, nodded at Boxcar and sat down at his little desk. Box-



Boxcar had no time to turn as a long black shadow . . . shot toward him with an uplifted chopper.

car estimated that four miles of the ten-mile stretch had shrieked past in the black, stormy night.

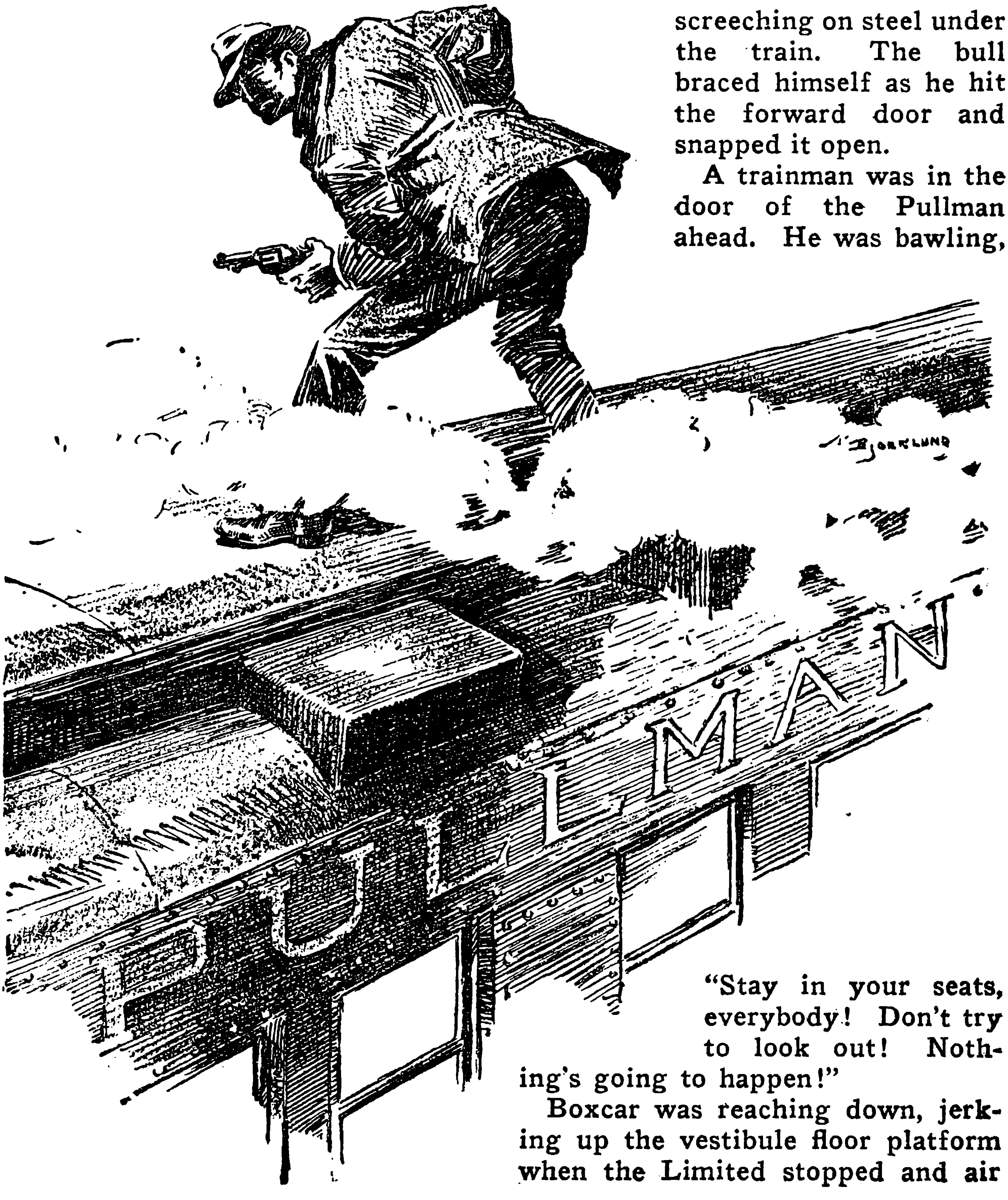
He thought, "It will be something to get this consignment through, and then I'll pull a dummy one with special guards and maybe trap the killers——"

It happened as quickly as that, right in the middle of his big thought.

AIR first hissed from the rear of the club car with the pulling of the emergency stop cord. And because of the icy rails, the "hogger" must have poured a lot of sand as he locked the brakes. Boxcar's chair jumped over as he heaved himself out of it. The Pullman conductor jammed into his desk.

"Stick here, Blondie!" grated Boxcar, jumping into the narrow vestibule ahead. Steel was screeching on steel under the train. The bull braced himself as he hit the forward door and snapped it open.

A trainman was in the door of the Pullman ahead. He was bawling,



"Stay in your seats, everybody! Don't try to look out! Nothing's going to happen!"

Boxcar was reaching down, jerking up the vestibule floor platform when the Limited stopped and air hissed from releasing brakes. In another second, he would have been outside; but a staccato chopping started, and it came from both sides of the coaches up ahead.

A woman screamed in the next Pullman. Sleet still slapped and rattled outside, but there was more than sleet slapping along the steel sides of the cars. That was the way it had been in the first two holdups.

Machine guns barring all exit from the train doors, Boxcar was too smart to climb out into that kind of hail. So he sprang back into the club car, and as he came through the vestibule he saw the fat, gray-haired Pullman conductor on the observation platform.

The conductor yelled, "Damn them to hell!" He had a revolver and was starting to peer around, holding onto the grabiron. His revolver was never fired, and Boxcar shouted too late.

Blood spurted from the conductor's neck and he draped himself over the polished brass, half his body jerking with the thudding hail of lead. Blondie grabbed at Boxcar with both hands and cried out, "No! No! Big boy! I won't let you ——"

But his big feet were already on the rear rail and he was catching hold of the edge of the car roof to swing himself up. It was rough, but he had to push Blondie violently with one toe to free himself. She fell down, screaming at him.

It was a ticklish swing, but Boxcar had walked too many tops to mind that. He hit the car roof center and started forward.

CHAPTER II.

DEATH ON THE TOPS.

BOXCAR REILLY wished mightily for the catwalk of a freight as he balanced precariously along the smooth, icy tops of the Limited. The leaden hail had ceased rattling along the train, but to show himself below would start it again.

Three coaches up, he was desperately trying to hurry, crouching low enough to be concealed from the killing choppers on the ground. He could see the glow from the fire box of the engine and the roofs seemed to be clear.

Boxcar was thumbing his huge, old-fashioned .44, swearing, hoping to make it to the forward express car in time to cut loose before the killers blasted open a door. But the sudden hammering of a machine gun, and a second after that the agonized death scream of a man, told him he was too late for that, and it made him sick.

Well, damn them! He would be up there before they loaded the three small boxes of gold! He saw the outline of their auto now on the highway alongside the train, where the yellow light came from the blasted express car.

They might get him, but at least he could account for every shell in his old gun. So he slipped from roof to roof, twice narrowly missing a slide and a fall off the iced, sloping tops. When he came to the roof of the forward express, he flattened, snaking his way over onto the car, eyes fixed upon the three or four figures he could see moving between the train and the auto.

Two masked men, wearing long, black slickers, loomed into view. They were carrying a small but weighty gold box between them. Boxcar wished he could see the engine cab, but he couldn't. He was sure that one or more men with choppers would be in there with the hogger and his fireman.

He could have burned down both

of the two men carrying the box, and possibly it would have signed his own death warrant. But he wasn't thinking of himself. He had to consider the hogger and the fireman. He decided to slip forward and pick off the killer holding them.

So he slithered, catlike, along the express-car roof. His eyes were pulled to one side, to the ground, where he now made out four masked men, all looking exactly alike in the black slickers.

One man on the engine and these four? He ticked them off in his mind. He had five bullets in the old .44, and all the advantage of being on the roof. And he raised his head enough to see one man with a machine gun on the tender behind the cab.

Boxcar's quick eye also cornered over his left shoulder, but he had no time to turn as a long, black shadow arose from beside a ventilator and shot toward him with an uplifted chopper. No doubt the man who had remained flattened, waiting as Boxcar had passed him, made a mistake in failing to turn loose a finishing blast.

Instead, the gunman was just behind Boxcar when he lifted the snout of the chopper and started a vicious blow for the back of Boxcar's head. He intended a surprise, but the surprise went suddenly into reverse.

BOXCAR'S body shifted sideways with lightning speed. His left hand snapped up, caught the chopper muzzle and jerked it down. Boxcar rolled flat on his back and struck with the barrel of the .44, the metal of the gun crunching the other man's forehead and splitting it all the way through the bone.

For ten precarious seconds, the bull fought to keep the man's body from slipping all the way to the edge of the roof. Boxcar got a break then, for just as his revolver split the other's head, one of the men below started another machine-gun burst back along the train.

And before the echoes of the blasting gun had died, Boxcar had pulled off the dead man's black slicker and his slouch hat and mask.

One of the bandits below yelled out, "All clear down here, Charley! Hey Pete! Tell that engineman to get the train the hell outta here! C'mon! We're clean!"

Boxcar Reilly nursed the machine gun taken from the man with the broken skull. He swung down the grabiron ladder, his thick legs kicking inside the long black slicker taken from the corpse, his red hair and his face concealed by the dead man's slouch hat and mask.

The bull's thick fingers caressed the chopper in his hand. His eyes were slaty when he saw one of the express boys with only bloody nothing where his face had been. And it hardened him plenty for what he intended to do.

One masked man was climbing down off the engine, swearing at the hogger and waving his machine gun. Another man was coming back along the train, and one was coming through from the other side.

Six of them. But Boxcar shuffled toward the waiting auto and slanted his eyes along the train. He was hoping the passenger who had pulled the stop cord would be joining his fellow killers. Then he figured the crook playing passenger would be smarter to stay on the train and probably would.

Thus Boxcar took his time moving toward the car on the highway, waiting for the others to precede him. One of the men growled, "Must 'a' been damn cold up there, Charley?"

"Yeah!" grunted Boxcar and

waved his big arms, beating one hand along his leg as if it were numbed.

"Okay! Let's lam!" snapped a man climbing in behind the wheel.

THE high drivers of the engine were shooting fire from the sand the hogger was pouring. The hogger had been looking into the snout of a chopper too long to have any desire to stick around.

None of the men had pulled off their masks yet, and Boxcar considered this a big break as he maneuvered to be the last man into the automobile. And now he had all the killers, six of them, under the muzzle of the chopper. Two men were pulling off their masks then, and Boxcar had the chill of steel in his voice.

"Hold it!" he rapped out, slapping his own mask and hat off his rust-red hair. The first one moves is mincemeat!"

Startled oaths burst from the straight-lined mouths. Boxcar was itching for the chance to cut loose as the Upstate Limited rolled by, gathering speed behind him. If just one man gave him the excuse, he would even the score here and now for the gray-haired Pullman conductor, for the express boy without a face.

And one man did it. He dropped abruptly to the ground, his hands bringing his own chopper up. Boxcar yelled, "Damn alla yuh! Take it!" His big hand squeezed the trigger of the captured machine gun.

Nothing happened. Not even a click. Boxcar went suddenly sick, and he banged the chopper down and went for his .44 too late. The driving sleet on the tops had packed and frozen the machine gun's mechanism, and that was possibly why the dead man on the express car had not burned him with it.

The chopper in the hand of the man on the ground blasted, but one other man was fast with his foot and kicked it to one side. Another man lunged at Boxcar and beat him to his revolver. Metal smashed into the bull's face, and he went out in a blaze of light between his eyes.

BOXCAR REILLY heard a malevolent voice say, "It'll be a lesson to some of the other bulls when all they find is the bones and his handcuffs! Okay, Pete! Touch 'er off an' let 'er go!"

Light flared up suddenly with a hissing explosion. Boxcar was just enough awake to know he was in the front seat of a car, and that the car was starting over and down a precipitous grade. He tried instinctively to clear himself, and he knew then what the voice meant by the handcuffs.

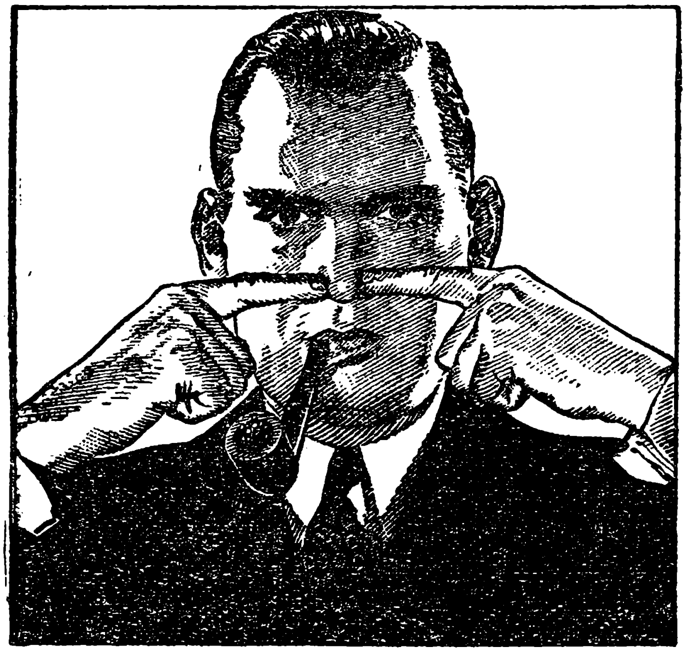
As the car gained momentum and the fire ignited in the seat behind him swiftly grew redder, he discovered his arms were handcuffed around the car's steering post. He could twist enough to see men on the roadway above him. Then all bottom dropped out from under the wheels.

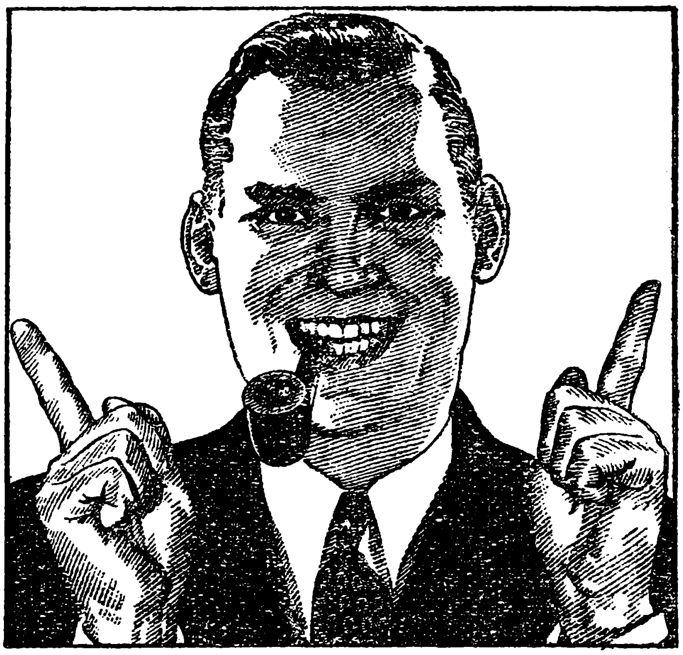
Boxcar's body thumped upward, down and upward again. The plunging car turned over at least twice. On the second turn, his weight and desperately wrenching strength bent the steering post, cracked the flexible wheel and ripped it off.

Swoosh! The car flattened its body in the shallow water of a creek a hundred feet or more below the highway. The gas tank cracked open and the already spreading fire became a twisting, roaring column of blazing hell.

Heat blistered the exposed portions of Boxcar's body, but he remained inert. The crashing impact

LET THIS TEST LEAD YOU TO MORE PIPE-PLEASURE!





1 If you think you enjoy tobacco flavor chiefly through your sense of *taste*...make this simple test. While you're smoking, pinch your nostrils shut. Note that your tobacco smoke tastes flat...*flavorless.*

2 *Now let go.* The flavor returns immediately, proving that you enjoy tobacco flavor chiefly through your sense of *smell.* That's why HALF & HALF'S distinctive *aroma,* added to its finer *taste,* gives you richer, fuller tobacco flavor. This exclusive quality is called FLAVOROMA.

Why you get FLAVOROMA only from Half & Half

As the test shows, you enjoy flavor *partly* through your sense of taste, *largely* through your sense of smell.

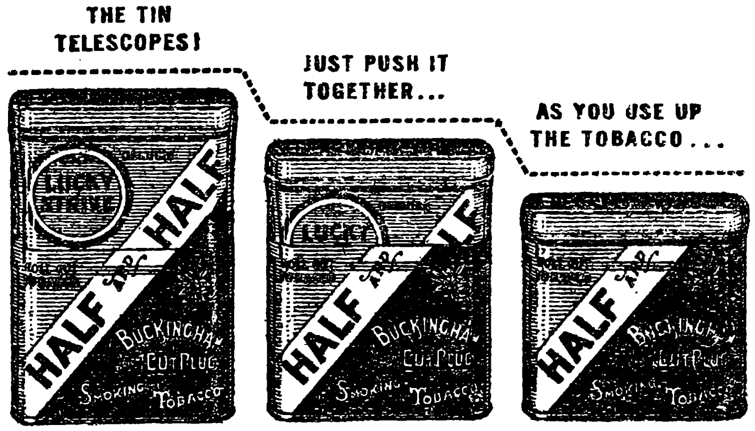
Knowing this, we set out to blend a tobacco appealing partly to your tongue, but *especially* to the keen nerves at the back of your nose.

In HALF & HALF, we got a blend that does just that. A blend with a special quality which we call FLAVOROMA...a perfect combination of AROMA and TASTE that produces finer tobacco flavor.

It is this exclusive quality of FLAVOROMA in Half & Half that gives you *more* pipe-smoking pleasure.

Try HALF & HALF yourself. Learn why FLAVOROMA is switching so many pipe-smokers to this tobacco every day.

Copyright 1938, The American Tobacco Company


THE TIN TELESCOPES!
JUST PUSH IT TOGETHER...
AS YOU USE UP THE TOBACCO...
LUCKY STRIKE
HALF AND HALF
BUCKINGHAM CUT PLUG SMOKING TOBACCO

THE TELESCOPE TIN gets smaller and smaller as you use it, makes tobacco easy to get at all the way down. No scraped fingers as you reach down for the last load. (Patent No. 1,770,920.)

Enjoy the FLAVOROMA of

HALF AND HALF

FOR PIPE OR CIGARETTE

had hurled him through cushioning bushes and dropped him in the icy water of the creek, but it also had veiled him in darkness.

"Rubbing out Boxcar Reilly is the biggest damn night's work we ever pulled! If there's any man would've nosed out our set-up, it's him!"

The voice on the road above was gloating and self-assured.

It added, "Okay, Pete! Get 'er moving! C'mon inside!"

Boxcar wasn't sure his bones were all intact. But his head, at least, had escaped, for he could hear perfectly. A motor wheezed and back-fired. The burning car was so close his clothes were smoking.

Being still handcuffed and unarmed, Boxcar kept quiet. No doubt they believed him dead in what was intended to be his funeral pyre. Then a strange sound floated down. It seemed as if a whole roost of chickens had suddenly become frightened.

The fowls squawked and beat their wings loudly. Boxcar heard a small truck being driven away. Then he clinked his handcuffs on a rock, pulled them off, and started climbing to the road.

CHAPTER III.

CHICKEN HIDE-OUT.

BOXCAR REILLY had been over this ground after the two previous robberies. This was a side road off the main highway. Here it topped a rocky ridge. Boxcar listened intently, looked for lights of some farmhouse.

There were no buildings anywhere near the high road on the steep shoulders of the ridge. So there was no chicken roost near by. Five minutes after he started walking, Boxcar came to the main highway. He knew then that little time had elapsed since the train robbery.

The car of the killers had been wrecked and burned less than two miles from the murder scene. Boxcar's watch was intact. It still lacked minutes until midnight. The train had been stopped at about eleven o'clock.

Besides this, no sirens wailed in the icy storm. So the outside State and county law had not yet been informed of the holdup and the murders. Boxcar moved fast to overcome the chill of his wet clothes and swore in low gutturals.

"So the damn, lousy rats went right back toward where they pulled the killin'! That means they had a way of doin' it that wouldn't be suspected! By hell! I've got it!"

A car's twin lights bored along the highway. Boxcar slipped to one side and let it go by. The car was too quiet to be the law, and was being driven carefully on the icy concrete. Boxcar judged the hogger would have made the first station twenty miles up the line before an alarm went out.

Farmhouses here were close together, with a rural mail box about every quarter of a mile. Boxcar paused at each farm lane and listened. Once a rooster crowed and he paused, tense. But two other roosters joined a strident chorus from different directions and Boxcar let out an oath, remembering all roosters had that midnight habit.

There was no light showing in any of eight or ten farmhouses he passed. There was no light, either, in this one, setting far back from the road, but Boxcar flicked his trick cigarette lighter beside the rural mail box. He had been doing that at every box.

This time he doused the little light instantly. The name had hit him right between the eyes. He had read:

OBADIAH GAMM.

"Might 'a' known it, by hell!" he grated. "If I'd had any brains, I'd have spotted him for a phony! Farmers nowadays ain't that hayseedy!"

A little lane wound down alongside a gurgling creek. Boxcar went along it cautiously, making toward the black loom of buildings. When he was in the lane, he could see the faint shine of a light at the back of the farmhouse.

Then he heard the chickens. They were making only a slight cackling noise, as if protesting some disturbance.

A LOADED chicken truck was setting under a shed near a long hay barn. Boxcar crouched, listening. He could tell the chickens were in crates on the truck. And he knew this was the truck in which the train-holdup killers had left the place where they had burned their car.

He debated swiftly whether to or to reach another farmhouse and raise an alarm.

But a flaring match decided the issue. One black-slickered man was standing behind the truck, and he was lighting a cigarette. The tiny blaze was shielded, and it showed the small truck loaded high with crates of chickens.

Boxcar became aware, instantly, that the man was alone. He had been left to guard the truck. But why? There could be but one reason. If the law descended upon this chicken farm, asking questions, probably one or two "chicken farmers" would be around. There would be nothing suspicious about a load of chickens ready to move to the city.

The gold loot from the train could be nowhere else but in that truck. Without doubt, an overalled driver could pass right by all the law in the State with his squawking chickens. And the gold in the truck would have been safe enough; but the killers hadn't believed so, and they had made the mistake of leaving a guard.

Boxcar moved a slow foot at a time. He flattened, becoming a part of the sleety, black ground. Closer and closer he crept, ears strained against any possible interruption from the men no doubt having a few drinks for themselves in the house.

The slickered guard had no chance to let out a warning squawk. Boxcar's sledge-hammer right drove into the back of his neck, even as his left hand trapped the man's throat and cupped his chin upward with spine-cracking force. The guard made one convulsive movement and went as limp as an empty sack.

The railroad bull damned all chickens then. He was sure their squawking could have been heard ten miles, as he pulled two crates from the rear of the truck. Perhaps it was the beat of the sleety wind on the farmhouse that prevented a quick alarm.

Boxcar saw the completeness of the set-up. The three small but weighty boxes of gold were in the truck. Also, the space inside the crates was so boarded off that a dozen men could have been concealed inside. Probably they had, passing back and forth from the city under the eyes of the law looking for the previous holdup killers.

Having gone this far, Boxcar realized there was but one thing to do. The gold boxes were weight enough for two men. But Boxcar's steel muscles managed them. He had taken an automatic rod from the senseless guard, and he kept it ready.

STILL no men came from the house. Boxcar did some quick thinking. Five minutes later, the three boxes were in the deepest hole in the creek. Even if it were known they were there, men would have to go in over their heads to reach them, and that could not be a quick job.

Boxcar was perspiring. And as he dumped the last box, he heard the first siren wail out on the highway. A patrol car flashed by, going toward the scene of the train holdup. Boxcar had a hard grin now, and he got back into the little lane.

He would wait until another police car came; then, he would start shooting. Before the killers in the farmhouse could get organized, he would have the State and county law on top of them. The name of Obadiah Gamm had been the undoing of the murder gang.

He started with infinite caution back along the lane toward the farmhouse, for he wanted to be in position to cut off a retreat into the darkness away from the highway. So he made for the long hay barn, seeing that its corner would give him an unobstructed view of the lighted room of the farmhouse and the rear door.

Boxcar's hand was itching to feel the jump of the automatic. He hoped he could do his share before other law arrived to ease the grim vision of the dead Pullman conductor and the faceless express boy.

Another patrol siren wailed out on the highway, and Boxcar lifted the automatic to flame out a couple of shots. It must have been the steel barrel of a chopper that caused the brain-blasting explosion between his ears.

The automatic flew from Boxcar's hand without being fired, but Boxcar Reilly didn't know that.

IF his own handcuffs had not been on his wrists again, this time behind him, and if his ankles had not been tightly drawn together with horse-halter straps, Boxcar might have believed he had awakened in a soft bed somewhere. But it was fragrant hay, and it was tickling the back of his red neck as a burning swig of liquor half strangled him.

"Easy, Pete," warned a harsh voice. "Damn him! He's got to come out of it long enough to talk! The smart punk hid that stuff, an' he ain't no good to us dead!"

A flashlight blazed in Boxcar's eyes. He pushed the whisky bottle away, groaned and looked into the face of the speaker. The man was a new one to him. Other faces swam in a haze, and he didn't know any of them. A new gang, he thought, and with a perfect set-up—or almost perfect.

All were wearing cheap farm shirts and worn overalls. They might have been mistaken for what they were posing to be. The leader had a slightly twisted nose and ratty eyes. When he saw Boxcar was conscious, he shot out a brutal hand, twisted fingers into his hair and a thumb against one eyeball.

"Now, damn yuh!" he snarled. "Where'd you put the stuff? This eye goes first, an' it won't be pleasant! If you don't talk, after that I'll——"

"And if I do, after that it wouldn't do to have me alive anyway, so I'll see you in hell first!"

Boxcar gritted his teeth to say it,

as needles of pain shot from his slowly prodded eyeball into his brain.

"Wait a minute, Joe," said another man. "That won't do. It'd put him out again. But there's that blue vitriol. It'll take his damn face off an inch at a time and——"

"Smart, Pete!" snapped the leader. "Get it! But any minute one of them damn cars may turn in!"

"They'll wait until daylight to stir up the farmers," said Pete. "They did the last times. We've got a few hours."

Pete was sliding out of the haymow. Boxcar heard his feet hit the barn floor. "You can burn me to hell, but you won't make me——" he was saying.

The man called Pete suddenly cried out below, "Hey, Joe! Quick! There's a damn dame!"

There was a quick, scuffling sound and a blow. Boxcar's big body chilled from neck to toes. He heard a little scream. Blondie Doran!

CHAPTER IV.

FLUSHED OUT!

TWO evilly gloating, hard-faced men were holding Blondie Doran rigidly upon a long plank laid across the yielding hay. The leader, "Twist-nose," stood over her and slowly permitted a drop of liquid to come from a little bottle. The drop fell into the hay.

"Watch the damn stuff smoke, Boxcar Reilly!" he said. "And you, too, sister! Wherever it hits, there'll be a hole in that pretty pan of yours, an' it'll stay there for life!"

One man gripped Blondie's trim ankles, and another held her arms stretched above her bright, blonde hair. Only one other man stayed beside Boxcar, and his own piggish eyes were too absorbed in what was about to happen to the girl to be watching the railroad bull closely.

How Blondie had come here, Boxcar did not know. This girl had helped him in some amazing ways in the past. But he did have the sickening realization that nothing but a miracle could now spare either her beauty or her life.

The fiendish, killer mind of Twist-nose had quickly conceived the idea that the bull would talk quicker if the girl were tortured. Boxcar would, too, but what damned good would that do? Now it would be Blondie as well as himself they would have to silence for keeps!

Twist-nose grated, "Here, clamp down on her kisser so she won't yell! Hold them lights so they don't show through the barn cracks! Listen to them damn cars!"

Police sirens of cars passing and repassing out on the State highway could be heard. Then they died away. Boxcar knew they would be at the scene of the holdup, blocking the roads in all directions, sending out alarms for the killers at a distance, while the murderers put on a torturing act here on the quiet farm right under their dumb noses.

He debated if telling where the gold was cached would prevent the torture of Blondie? He would have to do it, he was sure. But on the other hand, that would only hasten the bumping off of both of them.

Once the killers located the gold boxes in the creek, they would have no further use for a blundering railroad bull and his girl. Less than no use whatever. They couldn't afford to let them live.

So Boxcar gritted his teeth and waited. The man left beside him was bending forward, avid eyes intent upon the girl.

DANCING MAN

THE CACTUS KID
James Roberts

THE KIDNAPING SYNDICATE

THE CRATER OF KALA
Joseph Montague

3 FOR $1.00

POSTPAID

FORMERLY 75c EACH

SPECIAL NEW LOW OFFER

Don't miss this opportunity to get these beautifully bound "extra stock" books at this new rock-bottom price. Check the book titles you desire, fill out the coupon below and send with the right amount to CHELSEA HOUSE PUBLICATIONS, 79 7th Avenue, New York City, N. Y.

CHELSEA HOUSE books are original stories. All books are cloth-bound, printed on good paper in large clear type. Each book is attractively jacketed making an inviting addition to all bookshelves.

LOVE

- ☐ **PARADISE ISLAND** by Eleanor Elliot Carroll
- ☐ **DANCING MAN** by Beulah Poynter
- ☐ **HER DESERT LOVER** by Louise Carter Lee
- ☐ **THE WOMAN IN MAUVE** by Georgette MacMillan
- ☐ **APRIL'S DAUGHTER** by Philip Fair

ADVENTURE

- ☐ **GEMS OF PROMISE** by Emart Kinsburn
- ☐ **THE CRATER OF KALA** by Joseph Montague
- ☐ **FOOLS OF TREASURE** by W. E. Schutt
- ☐ **RONICKY DOONE** by David Manning
- ☐ **THE GLACIER GATE** by Frank Lillie Pollock

WESTERN

- ☐ **WHITE WOLF'S OUTLAW LEGION** by Hal Dunning
- ☐ **SILVER SPURS** by Joseph Montague
- ☐ **OBJECT: ADVENTURE** by Ray Courtney
- ☐ **THE CACTUS KID** by James Roberts
- ☐ **THE FIGHTING WADES** by John H. Hamlin

DETECTIVE AND MYSTERY

- ☐ **THE PURPLE LIMITED** by Henry Leverage
- ☐ **WHO KILLED WILLIAM DREW** by Harrington Strong
- ☐ **THE GREAT RADIO MYSTERY** by Chester K. Steele
- ☐ **THE SCARLET SCOURGE** by Johnston McCulley
- ☐ **THE KIDNAPING SYNDICATE** by Christopher B. Booth

CHELSEA HOUSE PUBLICATIONS, 79 SEVENTH AVE., NEW YORK CITY

Enclosed find $.................. Send to the filled in address these checked Chelsea House Books.

NAME ....

ADDRESS..

CITY & STATE..

"All right, do you talk, smart bull?" grated Twist-nose.

"Don't, Boxcar!" screamed Blondie suddenly. "Don't——"

A hard hand slapped down over her mouth and her scream became a gurgle. Twist-nose swore and lifted the bottle slowly. And at that instant, Boxcar discovered his vest had been torn and crumpled under his chin. He would not have noticed that, if there hadn't been the feel of a small, hard object against his jaw as he strained, twisting his head and watching Blondie.

Twist-nose was careful with the bottle of the damnable vitriol. He didn't want any of it on his own fingers, for it would sear human flesh like a red-hot iron. But the drop came out and the slender figure of Blondie was abruptly convulsed and writhing against the brutal hands holding her.

A LITTLE spread of blue smoke showed where the vitriol had hit her white shoulder, missing her face. But the scream of pain she could not have repressed was muffled under the filthy hand clamped over her mouth.

Boxcar cursed loudly. He did it quickly, to cover what he was suddenly doing. His face was in the darkness, and he was chewing the pocket of his torn vest, working it into his mouth. The gagging hand over Blondie's face was pulled away an instant and Blondie moaned.

But she cried out, "Don't talk, Boxcar! Don't——"

This time, Twist-nose swore viciously and wasn't so careful of the terrible acid. Several drops splashed, smoked on the girl's shoulder, and shriveled the white skin. Again Blondie became a writhing, convulsing figure fighting the hands that held her against the agonizing burns.

"Damn yuh, Boxcar Reilly!" snarled Twist-nose. "That's your last chance! The next time, it goes right into her eyes! Then she'll be——"

Boxcar's teeth clicked, and because of that he could not speak. A tiny flame shot from his mouth. His big head twisted and the little blaze was flipped over into the powder-dry hay. He could not wait to see if it caught and flamed, for his long, lean body doubled into a bunch, and his long legs straightened with the drive of a mule's kick in his big feet.

Though the man leaning over him saw the flame, yelled, and was starting to dive toward the trick cigarette

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISING

Patents Secured

PATENTS—Reasonable terms. Book and advice free. L. F. Randolph, Dept. 513, Washington, D. C.

WE SUCCESSFULLY SELL inventions, patented and unpatented. Write for proof, and tell us what you have for sale. Chartered Institute of American Inventors, Dept. 19-A, Washington, D. C.

Detectives—Instructions

DETECTIVES EARN BIG MONEY. Work home or travel. DETECTIVE particulars free. Experience unnecessary. Write GEORGE WAGONER, 2640-A Broadway, New York.

DETECTIVES—SECRET INVESTIGATIONS—TRAINING. Home—Travel. Particulars free. Chief Mullica, 14-S Journal Square, Jersey City.

Remedy

SUGAR DIABETICS. Send for free booklet. Otto Cisky, Leesburg, Florida.

Photo Finishing & Enlargements

SNAPSHOTS IN COLORS—Roll developed, 8 Natural Color Prints—25c. Natural Color reprints—3c. Amazingly Beautiful. Natural Color Photo, C-95, Janesville, Wisconsin.

ONE MASTER NATURAL COLOR ENLARGEMENT, two beautiful enlargements or eight reprints free with roll developed and eight higloss lifetime prints for 25c coin. Reprints 3c each. Satisfaction or money back. Sunset Service, 309 Sunset Building, St. Paul, Minnesota.

Help Wanted—Instructions

FOREST JOBS AVAILABLE $125-$175 MONTH. Cabin. Hunt, trap, patrol. Qualify immediately. Write Rayson Service C-59, Denver, Colo.

Parents

READ THE DIFFERENCE between sacrifice and duty to our children. Send money order 35c for most interesting booklet. Esther MacGillivray, 207 W. 80th St., New York.

HOLLYWOOD

WANTS YOU

THE WARNER BROS.–UNIVEX "HOME SCREEN TEST" CONTEST

SPONSORED BY

PICTURE PLAY MAGAZINE

OFFERS YOU A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY

★ ★ ★

This new exciting contest offers you a chance to win one of three WARNER BROS. SCREEN TESTS with FREE trips to HOLLYWOOD as guests of the fashionable BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL or any one of 75 other valuable prizes.

All you have to do is make your own screen test in your own home with your own, borrowed or rented movie camera. Anybody can enter. All you need is a face and a movie camera. There's no age limit! Films will be judged by Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, the editor of PICTURE PLAY MAGAZINE and two WARNER BROS. executives to be announced at a later date.

Be sure and read all contest rules, instructions and suggestions for HOME SCREEN TEST contestants in the current issue of PICTURE PLAY.

A completely informative booklet has been prepared especially for you. It tells you how to act before a camera, how to use and apply stage cosmetics, the art of dress and camera technique, etc. This booklet is yours for the asking. Fill in the entry blank below and send it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to PICTURE PLAY MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y., and this booklet will be sent to you immediately, absolutely free.

Don't delay! Reserve your issue of PICTURE PLAY MAGAZINE at your newsstand now. Enter the greatest of all contests today—the WARNER BROS.-UNIVEX "HOME SCREEN TEST". It offers you fame, fortune and fun!

HURRY! Mail this Entrance Blank to-day to PICTURE PLAY, Box S-7, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope and our special booklet giving valuable instructions will be mailed to you immediately.

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

CITY...................................... STATE...

AGE...................... HEIGHT........................ WEIGHT.......................

COLOR OF EYES..............COLOR OF HAIR..............COMPLEXION.............

lighter swiftly setting the hay ablaze, the hard heels hitting his stomach dumped him groaning upon his back. Red flame arose instantly from where Boxcar's cigarette lighter had fallen, shooting out blazing tongues that hit the powder-dry mow and spreading with little less than the speed of fired gasoline.

And Boxcar was rolling his big body toward Blondie, away from the fire, but hopelessly at that. Nothing but an explosive can become a raging furnace quicker than a mow of hay. The chances were a hundred to one that he would be roasted alive, and Boxcar knew it.

But he yelled, "Get out, Blondie! You can make it!"

For he saw that the suddenness of the fire had caused Twist-nose and his men to release the girl, thinking of nothing at the instant but of stopping that fire. And as two men plunged toward the flames, Blondie's freed hands struck out, hitting straight at the bottle of vitriol poised in Twist-nose's hand.

BOXCAR never had heard a man scream like Twist-nose screamed then. He staggered back from Blondie, clawing at his face and eyes, turning blindly this way and that, trying to lessen the terrible burning of the acid slapped out of his hand.

One other man got halfway to the burning hay, but cursed vilely as the blaze leaped at him and the heat drove him back. This man and one other, the one called Pete, were on their feet and seeing. Boxcar saw Pete going for his rod, and he groaned. There was nothing he could do to stop him, so he yelled again, "Blondie! You damn fool! Get out!"

For she was coming toward him, her legs sinking deep in the hay and impeding her. And already the fierce heat was almost blistering Boxcar's face. Pete and the other

WHY MEN PREFER
BIG BEN
SAVE THIS VALUABLE B&W COUPON
BIG BEN
SMOKING TOBACCO FOR PIPE & CIGARETTES
UNION MADE

BETTER TOBACCO *plus* VALUABLE COUPONS

IT'S DOUBLE VALUE—this union-made BIG BEN! Jammed with two full ounces of super-mild, sweet burley—crimp-cut for slow-burning "coolth"! Fresh? YES! See that air-tight Cellophane seal? AND—pipe the free B & W coupon! (One in each 2-ounce tin—8 in the pound air-tight canister!) Save 'em—for 46 knockout premiums! Try BIG BEN today! Look for the red tin with the thoroughbred horse on it. If you roll your own, ask for free cigarette papers. (Premium offer good in U.S. only.)

FREE PREMIUMS
B & W COUPON IN EVERY TIN
Send for complete illustrated catalog No. 15. Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp., P. O. Box 599, Louisville, Kentucky. Write now!

Eveready Flashlight. 85 coupons

Six Glasses 100 coupons

B & W Coupons are also packed with Raleigh, Kool & Viceroy Cigarettes

man got to the edge of the mow above the barn floor.

There Pete turned, his beady eyes showing the vicious killer he was.

"Damn yuh!" rapped out Pete. "I'll make sure you both go to hell!"

Pete lifted his rod steadily, taking that few seconds of gloating satisfaction that most killers desire in having a helpless victim under the sure death of his gun. Boxcar felt Blondie's struggling body hit him, her small hands pull desperately at the straps around his ankles.

He knew that fire, now bursting through the side of the barn, was shooting up its alarm that would bring help enough from the highway. But it would arrive everlastingly too late. Even then, he did the best he could, jerking his legs up and kicking Blondie away and down on her face as Pete's rod jumped and sliced out fire the first time.

Then Boxcar could only close his eyes as Pete's rod shifted to a more certain aim. And if Pete hadn't emitted a wild cry, he would have thought it was Pete's rod and the death shot, exploding.

But Pete's hands were flung up. And he was falling from the mow. The man with him jumped, but a shot cracked again from below. Then Blondie, her dress torn and showing little wisps of fire, was tearing again at the straps around his ankles, getting them loose.

But there was suddenly the shape of another man, looming in the light of the blaze over him and lifting his heavy body. Sirens were screaming outside. Boxcar saw Blondie jump past him to the floor of the barn, and he hit the same floor with a thump that knocked out his breath.

The man who had thrown him down was beside Blondie, beating out the fire on her dress. Boxcar heard the man talking in a nasal tone.

"Dangitall! Why in time didn'tcha wait fur me t' git a car,

TRAIN FOR ELECTRICITY IN 12 WEEKS HERE IN THE COYNE SHOPS
PAY TUITION AFTER GRADUATION

Mail coupon today for details of my "Pay after graduation plan" and famous Coyne "Learn by Doing" method of practical shop training for your start for success in this big-pay field. Age or lack of money need not hold you back . . . Get training first; then take 18 months to complete small monthly tuition payments starting 5 Months after you begin training.

12 WEEKS' TRAINING

Coyne Training is practical, thorough, easy to grasp . . . you learn quickly by doing actual jobs on real electrical machinery right here in my Chicago Training Shops -- NOT from books or printed lessons. You don't need previous experience or a lot of book learning. Expert instructors guide you every step of the way.

EARN WHILE LEARNING— JOB HELP AFTER GRADUATION

Big things ahead in Electricity means opportunities for steady jobs, good pay, and a real future in this fascinating "live" industry. Thousands of opportunities. Rush the coupon TODAY for Big Free Book containing many photos of the great Coyne Shops in Chicago, facts about Coyne Training . . . Free Employment Service . . . many earn while learning ...additional instruction in Diesel Engines, Electric Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning at NO EXTRA COST and amazing Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation Offer.

Learn by Doing

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
H. C. LEWIS, President
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. B8-45, Chicago, Ill.

H. C. LEWIS, President, Coyne Electrical School
500 S. Paulina St., Dept. B8-45, Chicago, Ill.

Send me, without cost or obligation, your Big Free Book and details of Pay-Tuition-After-Graduation-Offer.

NAME ____________________
ADDRESS ____________________
CITY ____________ STATE ________

$40 a week JOB

Earn $40 to $60 a week in such active fields as Drafting, Accounting, Air Conditioning, Diesel, Architecture, Merchandising, Electricity, Refrigeration, Mechanical, Radio. We prepare you at home and then help place you in right job. Low monthly terms—satisfaction or money back. Write for facts—no obligation.
American School, Dep. GB-7, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

LAW STUDY AT HOME

Legally trained men win higher positions and bigger success in business and public life. They command respect. Greater opportunities now than ever before. Big corporations are headed by men with legal training.

More Ability: More Prestige: More Money

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. Degree of LL. B. conferred. Successful graduates in every section of the United States. We furnish all text material, including fourteen-volume Law Library. Low cost, easy terms. Get our valuable 64-page "Law Training for Leadership" and "Evidence" books FREE. Send for them NOW.
LASALLE EXTENSION, Dept. 765-L Chicago

FIRST AID for ASTHMATICS

When asthmatic paroxysms occur, sufferers want *ready relief*. That is why we suggest inhaling the rich, penetrating smoke of Dr. R. Schiffmann's ASTHMADOR. This famous relief treatment has been continuously improved for 70 years thru modern scientific laboratory methods.

At your druggist in powder, cigarette and pipe mixture form, or send for *free trial supply* of all three. R. SCHIFFMANN CO., Los Angeles, California, Dept. S

ACCOUNTING
the profession that pays—

Accountants command good income. Thousands needed. About 16,000 Certified Public Accountants in U. S. Many earn $2,000 to $15,000. We train you thoroughly at home in your spare time for C. P. A. examinations or executive accounting positions. Previous bookkeeping knowledge unnecessary — we prepare you from ground up. Our training is personally given by staff of experienced C. P. A.'s. Low cost — easy terms. Write now for valuable 64-page book free, "Accounting, the Profession That Pays."

LASALLE EXTENSION, Dept. 765-H, Chicago

Accountancy
free!

'stead o' jumpin' off'n the train the fust time it slowed down! I knowed right off when you was gone, you'd rec'llected what I told you about rentin' my chicken farm to them city fellers an' goin' on a trip with more money than I could 'a' made off'n chickens in a year!

"But I hadda wait to git me a car, an' I didn't tell the dang police 'cause I wasn't sure them city fellers was the ones!"

The wisp of beard waggled on the long chin of Obadiah Gamm. He was holding a squirrel rifle in his hand, and he had got Pete just in time.

The State police were handcuffing the blinded Twist-nose and two other men, including the one Boxcar had kicked in the stomach.

BOXCAR REILLY was watching a State copper apply first aid to Blondie's burned shoulder. The bull was still a little dizzy, and mostly it was about this Obadiah Gamm, who looked just as hayseedy as ever.

"Dammit!" he growled. "I had Obadiah Gamm ticketed as the man who stopped the train! I was sure of it when I come onto his mail box and the murder gang holed up here! And that leaves one of them, the guy who did stop the train!"

"It doesn't leave one of them," said Blondie cheerfully. "And it wasn't a guy that stopped the train.

I WANT MEN

FORDS GIVEN

COFFEE ROUTES PAYING UP TO $60

National company needs more men at once to make regular calls on local routes. No experience needed. Operate on our capital. **Big bonus—$500.00 cash or Ford Sedan—besides your weekly earnings.** Rush name on postcard for FREE Facts. **ALBERT MILLS, 5236 Monmouth, Cincinnati, Ohio.**

IF I Send YOU THIS FINE SUIT—

Will You Wear It and Show It to Friends? I need a reliable man in your town to wear a fine, made-to-measure, all-wool DEMONSTRATING SUIT—advertise my famous Union clothing—and take orders. You can make up to $12.00 in a day. My line contains over 150 quality woolens, all sensational values, guaranteed. You need no experience or money. I supply everything required, FREE of extra cost. Write me today for FREE details. **H. J. GRAVES, STONEFIELD CORP., 1300 W. Harrison Street, Dept. G-952, Chicago, Illinois.**

Diesel

For several years, Diesel engines have been replacing steam and gasoline engines in power plants, motor trucks and busses, locomotives, ships, tractors, dredges, pumps, etc. And now the first Diesel-powered passenger car is on the market. Our home-study course offers you a real opportunity to prepare for a worth-while position in this new field. Write TODAY for full information. No obligation.
American School, Dpt. DB-7, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

60 POWER TELESCOPE $2.19

VARIABLE EYEPIECE. 20X—40X—60X

NEW! Three telescopes in one. 3 different magnifications. 20 power for ultra-bright images with 40 and 60 power for extra long range. Guaranteed to bring distant objects, people, sports events, ships, moon, stars, etc. 60 times as close. Most powerful made for anywhere near the money. Closes to less than a foot in length. Multiple lens system. 30 mm. objective, in heavy brass mount. Directions included for using as a compound 4 lens microscope. American made. We pay the postage. Only $2.19.
BROWNSCOPE CO., Dept. 7S, 5 W. 27th St., New York, N. Y.

GET A GOVERNMENT JOB

START
$1260 to $2100 Year

Common education usually sufficient.

Get ready at once.

Men—Women.

Mail Coupon today sure.

COUPON

FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. T194
Rochester, N. Y.

Sirs: Rush to me without charge (1) 32-page book with list of U. S. Government jobs. (2) Tell me immediately how to qualify for one of these jobs.

Name..

Address.......................................

GET BIG HUSKY MUSCLES!
$2.99
Send No Money
WALL EXERCISER
SHADOW BOXER
ROWING MACHINE
30 DAY TRAINING
FOR MEN ONLY
HOW TO GET STRONG

AMAZING NEW
37 FEATURE
Big Muscle Building Training Course

Save money on this amazing course of physical culture. Big Husky 10 Cable Muscle Builder Exerciser, 200 Lbs. Resistance (Adjustable). Two Heavy Duty Hand Grips. Wall Exerciser for back and shoulder development. Head Harness (adjustable) and Foot Gear. Rowing Machine Attachments. Skip Rope. The Great Shadow Boxer. Completely Illustrated Course "HOW TO GET STRONG". FOODS—EAT AND GROW STRONG. Secrets of Jiu-Jitsu. Wrestling Holds. Feats of Strength. Special Ways to Get Big Biceps. Strengthen Your Back. Muscle Gauge. Test Your Own Strength. Secrets of Chest Expansion. Stomach Muscles. Power for Legs and Thighs. "For Men Only." facts you should know. Developing Husky Legs. Special "30 Day Training Schedule" that tells you what to do each day and numerous other features. All This—For only $2.99. Send your name and address. We'll ship everything out by return mail. Pay postman only $2.99 plus postal charges. Outside U. S. cash with order.

HERCULES EXERCISES
49 East 21st St. Dept. G13
New York, N. Y. © I. P. D. Inc.

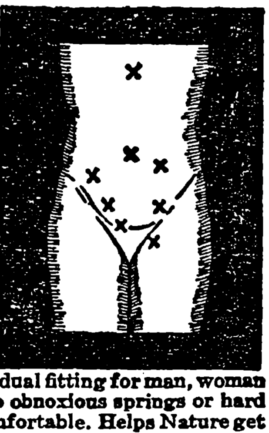
BE A
Traffic Manager
Good Pay—Good Opportunity

Big business needs trained traffic men and pays them well. Train in your spare time for this highly profitable, growing profession. Low cost; easy terms.
Write now for valuable 64-page book—FREE.
LaSalle Extension, Dept. 765-T, Chicago

High School Course at Home Many Finish in 2 Years

Go as rapidly as your time and abilities permit. Equivalent to resident school work—prepares for entrance to college. Standard H.S. texts supplied. Diploma awarded. Credit for H. S. subjects already completed. *Single subjects if desired.* Free Bulletin on request.
American School, Dpt. HB-7, Drexel at 58th, Chicago

Is Your Rupture HERE?



Why continue to suffer with rupture? Stop your worries and fears. Send for the facts about my perfected invention—the Brooks Appliance for reducible rupture—with the automatic AIR-CUSHION support that **gives Nature a chance to close the opening.** Thousands bought by doctors for themselves and patients.

Sent on Trial—Made-to-measure, individual fitting for man, woman or child. Low-priced, sanitary, durable. No obnoxious springs or hard pads; no metal girdle to rust. Safe and comfortable. Helps Nature get results. Not sold through stores—beware of imitations. Write today for full information sent free in plain sealed envelope.

BROOKS APPLIANCE CO. 188-T State St. Marshall, Mich.

It was that woman who didn't like your pipe, or pretended she didn't. And it was my friend, Obadiah Gamm, who nailed her when she was pulling the emergency cord out in a vestibule."

"And all I did, I guess, was burn the poor fellow's barn," said Boxcar.

"All except kicking me twice!" snapped Blondie. "And calling me a damn fool! But I supposed a girl has to get used to things like that if she hasn't any more brains than to tie up with a tough railroad bull!"

Our "Forgotten Heroes"

(Continued from page 75)

to make hop-heads of thousands of American citizens!

The crew was quickly mustered and given a thorough examination. Three of the Chinamen finally broke down and admitted that they were the owners of the dope. Later developments proved the seizure to be one of the largest ever made at New York. The value, at the then prevailing market prices, was approximately $100,000.

In the old diamond-smuggling days, before the duty was cut from twenty to ten per cent, Gregory O'Keefe had a real job cut out for him. Smuggled diamonds were flooding American markets and the Jewelers' Association was in an uproar. Something had to be done to stop this inflow and it had to be done quickly. John W. Roberts, now Supervising Agent, was placed at the head of a quickly-formed unit, which became known unofficially as the Diamond Squad. Did they produce? Well, let's look at the record.

In the year 1930 alone, Customs Agents enriched the U. S. Treasury to the tune of some $600,000 in fines and penalties. Some fifteen seizures amounted to almost $200,000. The other seizures were made among returning passengers who thought they could take a flyer with the Customs. Many clever smuggling schemes were unearthed.

But in Gregory O'Keefe's own words: "All of this is water under the bridge." Mr. O'Keefe is now Assistant Collector of Customs, having been appointed to that position on March 1, 1937. Next to the Collector of Customs, Harry M. Durning, Gregory O'Keefe is the ranking officer in Customs District No. 10, Port of New York. His new position is a responsible one and requires all the keen insight and experience which he gained through the years. When asked whether he thought ability was recognized in the Customs Service, his answer was an emphatic "Yes."

In parting, there was one more question: "What in your opinion, Mr. O'Keefe, is the single incident or happening which stands out most vividly in your memory?"

Gregory O'Keefe smiled. "I like to think of the fine Customs officers who started from scratch, worked with me in the Agency Service, and went on from there, receiving the promotion and credit due them for the fine job they had done. I speak especially of, John Mullen, who is now District Superintendent of the Customs Patrol at Buffalo; Joseph J. Flynn, Customs Agent in Charge of Philadelphia; Edward A. Gleason, now Supervising Customs Agent at Jacksonville, and George Collins, in charge of Narcotics at New York.

"All of these excellent officers and others were with me in the Agency Service, and I had the extreme pleasure of watching them grow and develop. I introduced round-table discussions, wherein each agent was permitted to voice his own ideas. I put the men on their own, gave them full sway in the cases to which they were assigned. The only requisite I insisted upon was absolute adherence to their oath of office. It proved a very effective method of productive supervision."

SNUBBED BECAUSE OF "ADOLESCENT SKIN"?

Act now to help keep your blood free of pimple-making poisons

Don't go on being cursed by loathsome pimples. Don't make others feel ashamed of you or shun you. Find out what's the matter and correct it.

During the period of adolescence, in the years between 13 and 25, important glands are developing. This causes disturbances throughout your body. Waste poisons from the intestines often find their way into the blood . . . and may break out in ugly skin eruptions. You must help free your system of these intestinal poisons.

Thousands of young people have solved this problem—simply by eating Fleischmann's Yeast. Each cake of this fresh food contains millions of tiny, *living* plants that act to help you eliminate waste poisons from the body—*before* they can get into the blood. Your skin becomes clearer and fresher again. Many get remarkable results in 30 days or less. Don't lose time. Start eating Fleischmann's Yeast *now* . . 3 cakes daily, one before each meal.

DO YOU WANT a new business profession of your own with all the trade you can attend to? Then **become a foot correctionist**, and in a few weeks earn big income in service fees—not medical, not chiropody—easy terms for home training, no further capital needed, no goods to buy, no agency. Established 1894. *Address*

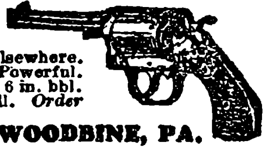
Stephenson Laboratory, 33 Back Bay, Boston, Mass.

MEN

Get free booklet about Zo-ak Tablets—the formula of well-known New York physician created especially for men. Zo-ak contains quick-acting vegetable stimulants plus essential vitamin concentrates in adequate amounts to build up health and strength. Ask for Zo-ak (blue box) at any good druggist, and write for free booklet by registered physician. Sent in sealed envelope by

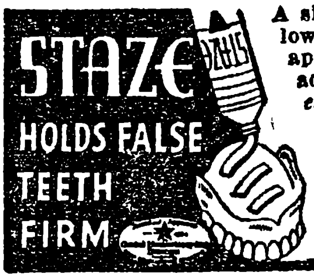
Zo-ak Company, 50 West 45 St., Dept. A, New York

FINAL SALE RUSH!!



ONLY $6.45—Double Action Revolver, costs $12 elsewhere. 22, 32 or 38 cal. Nickel or blue finish. Brand new. Powerful. Guaranteed 5 years. Ideal for target practice, 3 to 6 in. bbl. Send $1 with order. Cartridges free for cash in full. *Order today.* HOLSTER $1.50 Extra.

WINEHOLT CO., Box 22 WOODBINE, PA.



A single application on plates—even lowers—brings *all-day* comfort. One application lasts up to 48 hours. A new adhesive in cream paste form. *Nothing else like it!* More economical than powders. Recommended by dentists. Made by the makers of Stera-Kleen. Money back if not delighted.

FOR FREE SAMPLE write The Phillips & Benjamin Co., Dept.S-4, Waterbury, Conn.

GAMBLERS SECRETS EXPOSED

Fascinating book gives secrets of professionals. Learn how you are beat by Dice, cards, wheels, Slots and other games of chance. Send for interesting descriptive details and book "How to Play Poker," needed by everyone interested in this great game. Remit 25c to

M-G SALES CO., Box 4078, Kansas City, Mo.

NEURITIS Relieve Pain In Few Minutes

To relieve the torturing pain of Neuritis, Rheumatism, Neuralgia, Lumbago in few minutes, get **NURITO**, the Doctor's formula. No opiates, no narcotics. Does the work quickly—must relieve worst pain to your satisfaction in few minutes—or money back at Druggist's. Don't suffer. Get trustworthy **NURITO** on this guarantee. Don't wait.

BROADCAST *thru your radio* TALK - SING - PLAY

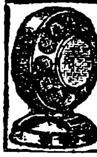
BROADCAST your voice on programs coming through your own radio set—make announcements from any part of the house—inject wise cracks, josh and mystify friends. Imitate radio stars, practice crooning, singing, radio acting, etc. Do a "Ben Bernie" or a "Rudy Valee."

World Mike

Made especially for home use, attached in a jiffy without tools. Not a toy. Put on your own programs at home, parties, club affairs, etc. Barrels of fun! Easy to operate.

Price Only 25c

DELUXE MIKE

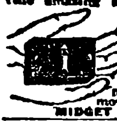


Large, substantial, all-metal mike. Practise radio singing, broadcasting, programs, etc. thru your own radio. Reproduces voice loud, clear tone without distortion. Regular table model—can be held in hand. Guaranteed.

Price Postpaid **$1.00**

MIDGET POCKET RADIO $1.00

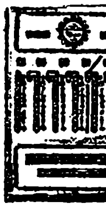
Listen to Music and Sports Everywhere You Go



This amazing midget pocket radio brings in programs within 25 miles of broadcasting station—even more under favorable conditions—in the country, in bed, at camp, office, etc., etc. ANYWHERE and EVERYWHERE. Merely connect an aerial and ground wire, attach single or double head phone and tune in. No expense to operate. No static or noise. No batteries, no tubes, no crystal to adjust. Just one moving dial to locate stations. MIDGET POCKET RADIO. Price......... **$1.00**

DeLUXE MODEL PRICE $1.95 Built-in phone, 1 unit. Operates like standard model... **$1.95**

VEST POCKET ADDING MACHINE $1

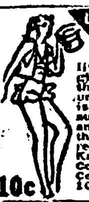


Adds, Subtracts, Multiplies & Divides

Here is a new pocket type of rapid calculator that enables you to add, subtract, multiply and divide in a jiffy. Does the work of a costly machine. Simple and accurate. No keys to punch—no lever to pull. Total always visible. Durable. Fits in pocket. Never in the way, but always ready for use. Strongly made. Adds up to 1 less than 1,000,000. With automatic pencil. 2½x4". Price. **$1.00**

Deluxe Model $1.30

Lives of Hotcha Chorus Girls



10c

Reveals all the intimate secrets and fascinating pastimes in the lives of famous Broadway hotcha girls. Tells in vivid detail every move they make from the time they get up until the time they go to bed. Nothing is omitted. For the first time a famous author takes you behind the scenes and gives you intimate glimpses into their secrets. Conceals nothing—the real story laid bare. Read and profit. Know what is going on. Price 10c. Confessions of a Taxi Dancer, 10c. Confessions of a Minister's Daughter, 10c Postpaid.

All 3 Books for 25c Postpaid

JU-JITSU DON'T BE BULLIED 30c

The Japanese art of self-defense. New methods of attack and defense are given, illustrated so that you cannot fail to understand them. Deals fully with trips, throws, wrist locks, body holds, defense against revolvers, strangling, armlocks, scissors, splits, headlock, holding a man down, double knee throw, stick attack, defense against knife, one hand throat grip, defense against two assailants, stomach throw, secret thumb knockout, nerve pinches, and numerous others. Learn to protect yourself under all circumstances with nature's weapons. Fear no man, guns or knives! "Science of Ju Jitsu" Only 30c.

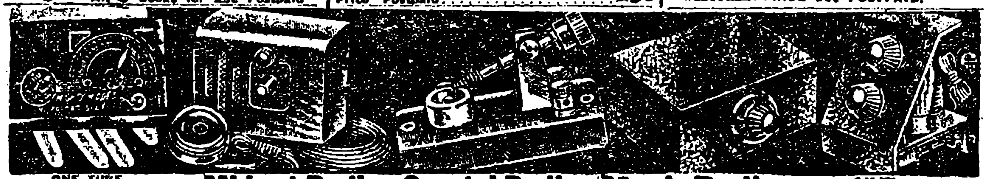
HOW TO PITCH By Kane's great hurlers. Curves, knucklers, drops, fast ones, etc. Full course. Price Postpaid.................... **25c**

5 Master Keys

Did you ever lose or forget your keys? Probably many times. Don't worry any more about lost keys (or any keys, for that matter), as these master keys will open most ordinary door locks. Five different keys for various types of locks. Will save their cost if you only use them once, but you'll probably find them so handy that you'll always carry them. Price..... **25c**

HOW TO LOVE 10c

Every normal being is susceptible to love's tender passion. When love comes the lovers realize how inadequate is the language at their command to tell the depths of the consuming passion that is gnawing at their hearts. It is to soothe the soul of the love-lorn that this work has been compiled. All about LOVE! PRICE 10c POSTPAID.



ONE TUBE POCKET RADIO

1-Tube Pocket Radio with built-in phone. MUSIC DIRECT FROM RADIO. Beautiful Cathedral tone. Complete in one unit with batteries, tube, switch. Fits in pocket. Listen anywhere with good aerial and ground. Uses ordinary flashlight dry cells. Lasts for months. Price Postpaid.. **$3.49**

Midget Radio

Beautiful midget mantel crystal radio. No batteries, no tubes, no expense. Receives stations within 25 miles. Radio complete with phone, wire for ground and aerial. Ready to use. Swell for desk, bedside, etc. Loud clear tone. Easy to hook up. Lasts a lifetime. Price Postpaid.. **$1.99**

Crystal Radio

Complete Radio. 25c! Get reception within 25 miles of station. All you need is aerial & phone. Completely assembled & wired. Sensitive crystal. Reception guaranteed. No tubes, no batteries, no expense. Make 3 connections and it's ready. Price Postpaid.. **25c**
Single Earphone...69c

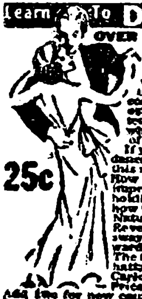
Magic Radio

Covers broadcast band only. 350 mile Reception. Bristol board cabinet, tuning dial, clips, condensers, resistor, hook-up wire, wiring diagrams, RCA tube, etc. Complete kit with tube. Fun and educational to build. Loud earphone volume. Price Postpaid. **$1.10**
Single Earphone ..69c

All Wave World Wide Radios

Remarkable results—simple operation. Covers 15-600 meters, police, amateur, broadcast, code, Short wave, foreign, etc. Kit with 1 coil. Tube, phones not included. 2-Tube Battery Kit **$2.00** 2-Tube Electric (AC-DC current. No batteries) Price **$2.99** Either set wired, 75c extra.

Learn to DANCE



25c

OVER 100 ILLUSTRATIONS

Kiss, Swing Dances

by. Good dancers are al- LATEST STEPS. Be popu- ways admired—always popular guests. Partners welcome them eagerly. The newest, smartest steps without a teacher. Don't make excuses when the music starts. Get lots of fun from parties or dances. If you want to become a perfect dancer, learn to dance at home this new easy way. BOOK TELLS How to develop poise & control, improve your dance steps, art of holding, how to walk to music, how to lead, latest foxtrot steps. Natural and reverse turns, the Reverse Wave, The Quickstep, swaying to music, Waltz, Backward changes, the Continental. The famous Kiss dance, the Manhattan, the College Rhumba, The Carlo, Charleston, etc. Price Postpaid........ **25c**

Add 10c for new course showing latest dances, Suzie-Q, Big Apple, Peckin', Truckin', Shag, Posin', Shine, Swing-it, Swing-Low, etc.

HOW TO TAP DANCE

PRICE 25c

Why envy the easy rhythm and fascinating grace of Step 'n Fetchit, Fred Astaire etc. Tap dance in ONLY 6 HOURS by a new simplified course by Prof. Wilson. No special ability needed. Be gay!! Everybody's tapping. The whole town is tapping. Beat out a tune with your feet.

310 Illustrations

Housewives love it. Friends adore it. Besides, tap dancing is not only invigorating and entertaining but is also a healthful exercise for making the limbs supple and giving a "springy" feeling of fitness to the whole body. Promotes slimness nature's way—no pills, drugs or dieting. Readers say: "...wonderful benefit. Thank you for adding tap dancing to my accomplishments." Price 25c postpaid.

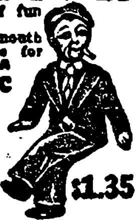
THROW YOUR VOICE

Into a trunk, under the bed or anywhere. Lots of fun fooling teacher, policeman or friends.

THE VENTRILO A little instrument, fits in the mouth out of sight, used with above for Bird Calls, etc. Anyone can use it. Never fails. A complete book with full course on Ventriloquism together with the Ventrilo sent postpaid for only.. **10c**

GET A VENTRILOQUIST DUMMY!

Glove Monkey Dummy
Fits like a glove. Movable hands and head. Will climb anywhere. Amuse, entertain everyone. Price Only....... **15c**

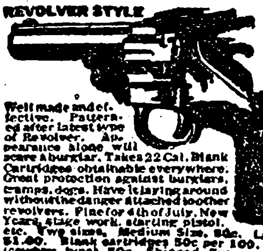


$1.35

Dummy Dan sits on your knee. Operate him from behind, moving his head and jaw. After you learn to throw your voice, make him talk just like the famous ventriloquists on radio and stage. Has attractive tailored suit. 18 in. tall. Looks life-like. Price..... **$1.35**

BLANK CARTRIDGE PISTOL

REVOLVER STYLE



50c $1.00

Well made and effective. Patterned after latest type of Revolver. Appearance alone will scare a burglar. Takes 22 Cal. Blank Cartridges obtainable everywhere. Great protection against burglars, tramps, dogs. Have it laying around without the danger attached to other revolvers. Fine for 4th of July, New Years, stage work, starting pistol, etc. Two sizes, Medium Size, 50c. Large size $1.00. Blank cartridges 50c per 100. Holster (cowboy type) 50c. Shipped Express Collect.

WHOOPEE CUSHION 25c

Whoopee Cushion is made of rubber, inflated like a balloon, and then placed on a chair, couch, seat, etc. When the victim unsuspectingly sits upon the cushion, it gives forth noises that can be better imagined than described. Price.. **25c**

YACHT CAPS 25c

Smart, snappy. Just what every real boy is wearing. Cool and comfortable. White Twill Yacht Cap, with black oilcloth peak, sweat band, gold braid and brass buttons with anchor. Price **25c** White Duck Yacht Cap, superior quality duck, white celluloid visor, gold cord, brass buttons and anchor. State size. Price Postpaid. **35c**

Death Ray Insect Killer

Kills Mosquitoes, Gnats, Etc.

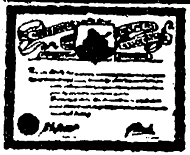
Attracts and electrocutes mosquitoes and gnats. Just screw it into any light socket, insert bulb and it attracts and eliminates insects. Cannot possibly harm human beings. Safe, sanitary, effective method of ridding your bedroom, house, kitchen or porch of insects. Guaranteed. Operates for hours for 1c on 110-120 volts AC or DC. Price....... **$1.49**

Live Chameleon

Watch It Change Color!
A LIVE PET

Get one of these most wonderful of all creatures. Watch it change color. Study its habits. Wear one on the lapel of your coat as a curiosity. Shoots out its tongue to catch flies and insects for food. No trouble to keep. Can go for months without food. About 4 in. long. Shipped to any address in the U.S.A. by mail. Live delivery guaranteed. Price... **25c** Add 20c for lapel chain.

Marriage License 10c

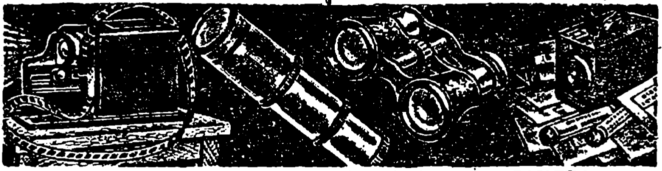


& Fun Licenses

Printed with seal suitable for framing. Hand one of these to a friend. Your choice:

Marriage License
Doctor's Certificate
Liar's License
Death Certificate
Birth Certificate
Arrest Warrant
College Diploma
Driver's License
Divorce Certificate
Liar & Grafter Cer.
High School Diploma
Beauty Queen Judge
Gamblers Certificate
Gold Diggers' Cer.
One Arm Drivers' Cer.
Kibitzer's Certificate
Gold Mine Stock Cer.
Air Pilot's License
Bootlegger Diploma

Price 10c Each License. Any 3 for 25c.



MOVIE PROJECTOR

Electric Projector. Bright clear pictures 14x18" in size. Insert film, turn crank and watch pictures. Uses flashlight cells. 5x3¼x1¾. Price Postpaid **35c** Film, 16m. 15c each. Western, Cartoon, etc.

Telescope

A BIG BARGAIN! 3 draw, magnifying pocket telescope. Fine for outdoors, nature study, sports, looking at moon, etc. Converted into Solar Telescope by using smoke glass. Price Postpaid **25c**

Field Glass

This genuine, classy Field Glass for only a quarter. Center piece, one finger focusing. Full, unhampered 2 eyed vision. Remarkable clarity. For sports, nature study, etc. Price **25c** Binocular Type 49c

CAMERA OUTFIT 45c

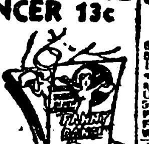
Take, develop & print your own pictures. Nothing else needed. Camera takes sharp 2x1¼" candid pictures. Films, printing frame, paper, chemicals. With full instructions. Price Postpaid **45c**

FRENCH PHOTO RING

A handsome ring, finished in imitation platinum & set with a large imitation diamond. In the shank of the ring is a small microscopic picture almost invisible to the naked eye, yet magnified to an almost incredible degree. Pictures of bathing girl beauties, French actresses, views of France, Panama Canal, Lord's Prayer (every word legible). Price Postpaid.. **25c**

FANNY DANCER 13c

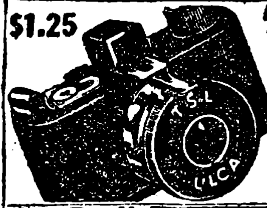
Hotsy Totsy



Who will forget the famous FAN DANCE at Chicago's World Fair? Here it is humorously, cleanly presented in vest pocket form. You flip the pages and HOTSY TOTSY comes to life and whirls through her dance, provoking not a sly smile, but a wholesome laugh from all, even the most fastidious. It is a most innocent fun maker that will cause you and your friends no end of fun and amusement. HOTSY TOTSY the FAN DANCER measures only 2x3 in. Price **13c**

World's Smallest CANDID CAMERA

$1.25



Precision Built in USA - Good Enlargements

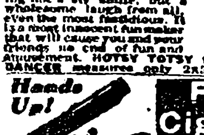
Although in size this camera can fit into your watch pocket, vest pocket or palm of hand, it will take some of the finest pictures you have ever seen. Accurately ground lens. Precision built shutter and direct vision view finder insure you of good shots with little difficulty. Takes 8 pictures, ¾" square upon each roll. Can be set for time and instantaneous snapshots, and locked so that no pictures can be taken. Pictures may be enlarged up to 8x10" still retaining an amazing amount of detail. Uses fine grain film that insures good snapshots even under adverse weather conditions. Join the ranks of the thousands of candid camera enthusiasts. Get unusual shots. Film easily removed and inserted. Price Postpaid only.......... **$1.25** Film for Camera, 6 Exposures, 10c, plus 3c postage. Complete outfit consisting of Camera, 2 Films, and Leather Case, Price Postpaid... **$1.90**

Hula Skirt 10c

On the beach, at masquerades or parties, or even hanging on the wall in the bedroom or den you will find this Hula Skirt provides a lot of amusement and fun. As soon as you receive your Hula Skirt, go up to your room, put it on, and then stand before the mirror and try to imitate the rhythmic movements of the native Hawaiians. Have your friends get Hula Skirts too and everybody will find it fun to "go Hawaii." As a fun-maker it's a knockout. 15 inches long, 20 inch waist. Price Postpaid Only........ **10c**

Pistol Cigarette Case 25c

Hands Up!



It looks like a deadly weapon, but it is merely a novel Cigarette Case. Better than the real thing in many an awkward encounter. Great fun "sticking up" your friends. They squirm and protest. Pull the trigger and the slide flies open, disclosing cigarettes. Price **25c**

REPEATING SLING SHOT

Automatic repeating slingshot that will fire 150 shots with one loading! Designed for accuracy. Bulls eye every time. Extremely powerful and hard hitting—will go through a thick magazine. More power than an air rifle. Sturdily constructed with non slip suede leather shot holder and thick lively cords. 150 BBs. Many hunters use Slingo for small game. Price **25c** 200 copperoated BBs for only 10c postpaid.

Good Luck Ring

Very striking, quaint and uncommon. Oxidized gunmetal finish; skull and crossbones design; two brilliant flashing red or green stones sparkle from eyes. Said to bring good luck. Price. **25c** In Sterling Silver, $1.00

Cigarette Stinkers

These Cigarette Stinkers can be placed in any cigarette so they will not be noticed, yet when the victim lights up and takes a few puffs, the cigarette throws off an awful "stink." A good joke for moochers. 6 stinkers 10c. Squirt Cigarettes, Package 15c

BIG ENTERTAINER

326 Jokes & Riddles, 25 Tricks, 10 Parlor Games, 73 Toasts, 13 Stories, 105 Money making Secrets, 22 Monologs, 21 Puzzles & Problems, Comic recitations, Funny Readings, 10 Parlor Pastimes, 13 Flirtations, 1000 Names & Their Meanings, 10 Picture Puzzles, 37 Amusing Experiments, Deaf and Dumb Alphabet, Shadowgraphy, Fortune Teller, Fortunes with Cards, Crystal, Tea Cup, etc., Hypnotism, Ventriloquism, Cut-outs for Checkers, Chess, Dominoes, Fox and Geese, 9 Men Morris, Anagrams, 25 Card Tricks, Crystal Gazing, etc. Now published in one big volume. Price Postpaid.. **15c**

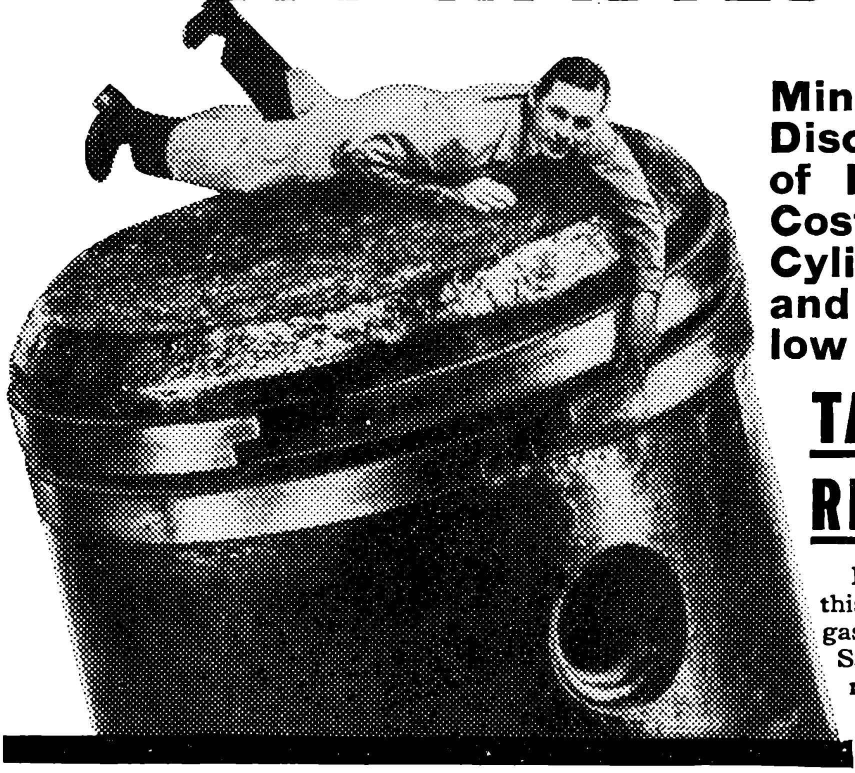
Address Orders For Goods on This Page To
Johnson Smith & Co. Dept. 216 Detroit, Mich.

Add 3c for 600 p. Catalog Send 3c for our NEW CATALOG, or 25c for the DELUXE EDITION with permanent cloth binding. Bigger and better than ever. New items—different items—things that you never thought existed—articles you always wanted but never knew where to get. Nearly 600 pages of magic tricks, latest novelties, joke goods, useful time savers, unusual books, sporting goods, puzzles, etc. Stamps accepted.

Midget Bible Size of a postage stamp. Over 200 pages of New Testament, every word legible. Said to bring good luck. **15c** Price Postpaid. [illegible] Bible 50c

Special Catalogs on Radios, Stamps, Seeds, Auto Accessories, Occult & Spiritualism, Magic and Books. Price 2c Each. All 7 for 10c

DON'T BUY RINGS *or* REBORE IF CAR WASTES OIL *and* GAS



Miner's Amazing Mineral Discovery Saves Up to 95% of New Ring and Rebore Costs—If Worn Rings and Cylinders are Wasting Oil and Gas Send Coupon Below for FREE SAMPLE

TAKES PLACE OF NEW RINGS AND REBORE!

Nearly a half-million motorists have used this revolutionary method of cutting oil and gas waste caused by worn rings and cylinders. Savings up to 50% reported. Give your car new power, pep, speed and quiet with this amazing mineral discovered in the Rocky Mountains. Awarded A. T. L. Seal of Approval.

Quickly placed through spark plug openings and at a fraction of the cost of new rings and rebore, this amazing mineral fills in and plates worn rings and cylinder walls. Ovrhaul gives your motor increased compression. Cuts oil consumption, increases gas mileage, adds new power and speed, with other substantial benefits of new rings and rebore. Ovrhaul has been thoroughly tested and proved by impartial laboratories and great Universities in the United States and abroad. Proved harmless to finest motors.

INSTALLED IN 30 MINUTES!

Ovrhaul works on the mineral plating principle —No special tools needed. No car tie-up. No danger of ruining motor by grinding cylinder walls—works in while you drive—saves you time and money. Gives you months of extra car use. A single application lasts up to 10,000 miles.

SAMPLE FREE!

If your car is wasting oil and gas, before you spend up to $151.37 for new rings and rebore—send your name and address on the coupon below for a free sample of this amazing mineral which expands up to 30 times when heated and full details of a real money-making opportunity. ***Air mail reaches us overnight.***

WHY PAY UP TO $151.37

For New Rings and Reboring?

If worn rings and cylinders cause your car to be an oil and gas eater —before you spend a lot of money, try Ovrhaul. Give it an opportunity to do for you what it has done for thousands of others. Here are costs of new rings and rebore on a few 1935 models:

Make	Cost of New Rings and Rebore	Time of Car Tie-up
Chevrolet	**$50.00**	**2 days**
De Soto	**62.50**	**2 days**
Dodge	**59.20**	**2 days**
Ford	**$50 to 55.00**	**2 days**
Buick	**80.00**	**2½ days**
Cadillac	**151.37**	**2 days**

ENDORSED

By Member of

Society Automotive Engineers
National Aeronautical Assn.
Detroit Soc. of Engineering
Pontiac Engineers Club

Let us send you L. H. Smith's complete report which shows that the compression of a badly worn 6-cylinder motor was increased 32.4% and brought back to within .09 points of its original new car efficiency. Such tests conclusively prove the sensational merits of Ovrhaul.

MONEY-MAKING TERRITORIES OPEN

For Salesmen and Distributors Who Act Quick!

Sales of Ovrhaul have been phenomenal. Hundreds of Salesmen and Distributors in the United States and abroad. The biggest money-maker in years. National magazine, newspaper and radio advertising carry the message of Ovrhaul to 18,000,000 car owners. The market has barely been scratched. To wide-awake men we offer opportunity—an opportunity which may never come your way again. A fast selling, repeating article, fully protected by U. S. and foreign patents. Saves motorists millions of dollars, ***Ovrhaul Sells for Less Than Spark Plugs.*** Exclusive territories still open—but you must act quick if you want in on this.

Phone, Write or Wire TODAY!

Let us send you free sample which every salesman is furnished for demonstration. Let us show you, with their permission, ACTUAL earnings of our distributors. Let us show you how you can start in this business NOW—before all territories are assigned. The market is there—we have the product—are you the man? Let's find out. Write, phone or wire today.

B. L. Mellinger, Pres., OVRHAUL CO., G-918 Los Angeles Calif.

MAIL THIS COUPON TODAY!

Free SAMPLE COUPON

B. L. Mellinger, Pres., *(Paste on Postcard and mail)*
Ovrhaul Co., G-918 Los Angeles, Calif.

Without cost or obligation, rush me FREE SAMPLE. Also show me your big money-making plan.

Name..
Address..
City. .... State............
Name and Make of Car.........................

• WITNESSED STATEMENT SERIES:
Ray Oglesby Has Smoked
Luckies for 11 Years
AN "EYE FOR TOBACCO"-
trained for 20 years
LUCKY STRIKE
"IT'S TOASTED"
CIGARETTES
20
LUCKY STRIKE

Copyright 1938, The American Tobacco Company

RAY OGLESBY, Independent Tobacco Expert, Says: "At Every Auction, Luckies Buy the Same Fine Leaf"

FOR YOUR TASTE... think over the cigarette preference of America's independent tobacco experts. These experts—like Ray Oglesby—are not connected with any cigarette maker. They are skilled auctioneers, buyers and warehouse operators. Sworn records show that with these men—with men who know tobacco best—it's Luckies 2 to 1.

FOR YOUR THROAT... keep in mind that only Luckies give you the throat protection of the "Toasting" process. This process takes out certain harsh throat irritants found in all tobacco. So next time try Luckies ... try them for a week, and see.

Sworn Records Show That... **WITH MEN WHO KNOW TOBACCO BEST- IT'S LUCKIES 2 TO 1**